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(UN)WRITING THE ACADEMIC OTHER:
THEORIZING THE “AT RISK” BODY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Educational Leadership, Research, & Counseling

by

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B.A., Louisiana State University, 2005

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August 2013

We cannot be born pre-programmed with an inherent idea of what it means to be human and how we have to be to get on in the world, nor with a fixed idea of what the world itself is. These ideas have to be developed through an engagement with the world. To be able to deal with the contingencies that form part of daily life, we have to be able to act upon information we are exposed to and adjust our ideas accordingly. It would seem more feasible to think of the self as a dynamic process, continually needing to adapt and change in response to its interaction with the world, while being influenced by its history through memory. Will, intellect and memory are all influenced by the world to a greater or lesser extent.

(Villiers-Botha & Cilliers, 2010, p. 33)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my Committee:

Dr. Roland Mitchell, Dr. Jennifer Curry, Dr. Petra Hendry, Dr. Jacqueline Bach, and Dr. Cynthia DiCarlo: Man can be likened “to a boat drawn up on the beach with one end of its keel in the water and the other in the sand” (Ortega, 1941, p. 154). Thank you for walking up to my boat, at times climbing in, at times kicking your feet over the edge of the boat and letting the water dance around your feet. At times, for sitting patiently with me in the sand, and listening with sympathetic ears about my plans. For sometimes stepping into the boat with me and helping me to plug the little holes that occasionally appeared at the bottom. For sometimes, diving into the water to determine why those darn holes kept appearing and allowing water in. For the times you picked up a paintbrush and helped me apply a wood finish. Or the times the waves tugged a little more than gently and you held onto the keel and encouraged me to maintain my hold as well. And when that boat was all fixed up, and I’d painted my name and invited you all to initial yours, for standing along the shore with a knowing wisdom that my boat would certainly stay afloat. That a farewell is never a goodbye. Thank you.

To LSYOU:

I now know what it means to be a part of the LSYOU Family. I remember precisely the moment it happened, on a van ride teeming with excited youth, loud music, a journey over a rickety bridge on a velvety dark night, and endless anticipation about our unknown destination. Hopefully, many others will be able to share their LSYOU Family “aha!” moments. Thank you.

To Dad, Mom, and my always-already best-friend Sister:

I love you, deeply.

PREFACE

This was always intended to be a project about culture. I was drawn to the idea of a summer program and its language of interaction with youth placed “at risk” for failure. While I sought to understand the “relational” nature of the program with its rhetoric of “family,” I soon came to realize the necessity of understanding the meanings and experiences that youths brought to the program, alongside their luggage, their pillows, and their posters. Geertz (1973) understood that culture and people equally inform each other when he wrote, “Without men, no culture, certainly; but equally, and more significantly, without culture, no men” (p. 49). Understanding culture then would necessarily entail understanding how the program “spoke” to the children as much as understanding how the children’s prior experiences allowed them to “speak” in the program.

To do this I had to have what Eisner refers to as “an enlightened eye,” (p.1) that is, I had to *see* rather than *look* at the program in its multiplicity. When one looks, one understands a scene in its totality. When one sees, however, one perceives through the many constitutive forces which make the whole. Thus, while one might look at a picture that conveys a dancer, the seeing eye would discern a seductive experience between the landscape, drummer, drum, dancer, and onlooker. A seeing eye would understand that every movement depended on the flow of energy from everything present, because energy is neither created nor destroyed but rather flows in a series of exchanges. In the case of the program, seeing it as a multinarrative allowed for a shift away from institutional metanarratives with their implicit panoptical singularity.

As a deconstructive project of totalizing discourses, I am concerned with attending to lives in all their simple complexities. By “attending” we make certain phenomena meaningful (Riessman, 1993). This means that taken-for-granted notions of language and of what it means to

be human are explored. Discourses of what it means to be “at-risk” are disrupted and illuminated by the deeply personal “little lights” offered by the students and institutional narrative of this program. Harry Loes’ (1895-1965) “This Little Light of Mine” sheds light on understanding these phenomena. He writes,

This little light of mine I’m gonna let it shine (x3)
Let it shine/Let it shine/Let it shine

Everywhere I go/ I’m gonna let it shine (x3)
Let it shine/Let it shine/Let it shine

Hide it under a bushel Oh no!/I’m going to let it shine (x3)
Let it Shine/All the time/Let it shine

Loes’ song articulates what I understand as practical knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Mitchell, 2010), that is, the experiential knowledge that gives rise to onto-epistemologies and informs practice and people’s ways of understanding the world. From the perspective of the light-holder, the light becomes a deeply subjective thing taken “everywhere.” However, this song fails to acknowledge how the *environmental* contributes to the formation of intersubjectivities. What became clear to me is the fact that I was not simply trying to understand how the children found their way into the intervention prevention program, nor how much of the program found its way into the kids’ lives, but rather what understandings made it possible for all to maintain, preserve, and keep their wicks lit through time, space, and place. What understandings offer a space that encouraged all to “let it shine, let it shine, let it shine?”

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ABSTRACT

A dominant Western historical reproductive narrative has constructed our knowledge of the “at risk” student body. Sustained through a metaphor of family, historical representations construct at risk as a matter of familial inheritance, through genetics, culture, or socioeconomic status. While at risk labels have changed over time, historical memory of at risk remains centered on a deficit-view of the family, while absolving social responsibility. This linear conception of “at risk” discourse disallows an interrogation of other systemic factors that can challenge or sustain the historical construction of the “at risk” body.

This dissertation draws upon poststructural, narrative, and curriculum theories to consider how “at risk” as a discourse is negotiated in the lives of working class youth participating in a summer program, Louisiana State Youth Opportunities Unlimited (LSYOU). Specifically, this project assumes that experience is mediated by multiple factors: language as discursive practices, relationships with institutional gatekeepers, and environmental culture. Through a reconsideration of the notions “public and private” synonymous with “state and family” I attempt to disrupt historical memory.

The data collected for this dissertation include audio recorded and transcribed interviews with students and institutional gatekeepers, student journal entries, public access websites, and field notes. After coding data, I used narrative analytic methods to generate themes; however, I also used a dialogic approach (Riessman, 2008) to consider individual narratives to explicate themes more in-depth. I also incorporate a discursive methodology of multiple voices in dialogue (Morrison, 2004), to consider alternative ways of understanding experience as discourse practice.

The findings revealed specific practices enable the negotiation of at risk as a discourse as participants moved from private to public spaces. Student narratives suggested language

structures reality, with many implications for their social networking accumulation process. Program narratives revealed specific strategies that aid in the negotiation of at risk discourse, such as an understanding of students' language of interaction, knowledge of institutional barriers that students from working-class backgrounds face, and a commitment to relationality. The LSYOU Family as a discursive social structure suggests a way to negotiate the dominant historical deficit narrative that plagues "at risk" youth.

INTRODUCTION: AT RISK IN CONTEXT

A strong history exists between poverty, ethnicity, and educational attainment. Low income children constitute 54% of public school systems in the South, coupled with the fact that the South comprises 40% of the nation's poor (Suitts, 2007). A legacy of the National Commission on Excellence in Education's (1984) publication of *A Nation at Risk*, is a federal mandate of excellence in education in a climate of increasing global economic competitiveness. In light of the widening gap between requisite skills necessitated by an increasingly specialized workforce, the credentialization of knowledge as a means of entry into the workforce, and class stratification, the U.S. must seek to narrow the achievement gap of its educational and economically challenged children (Walpole, 2007; Symonds, Schwartz, & Ferguson, 2011).

While modern educational reform discussions focus on incentivizing teacher performance, the implementation of a common core curriculum, and experiential funding formulas are necessary to an integrated approach at advancing educational achievement and attainment, often absent from purview are an understanding of the systemic barriers posing a disconnect between the existential conditions of low income and minoritized students in tandem with structural disparities existing at the home, school, and community levels.

"At risk" youth face a host of barriers affecting their matriculation through primary, secondary, and postsecondary education institutions. These barriers (as this dissertation will suggest) include a lack of experiential knowledge, an unavailability of enrichment opportunities, a lack of monetary resources necessary to connect students to enrichment opportunities, an absence of institutional resources addressing existential conditions, and anti-pragmatic structural policies and practices (i.e. social construct of public and private, with their respective roles, rules, and obligations). A focus on achievement that does not address low income and

minoritized students' fundamental existential conditions in tandem with targeted structural policies and procedures aimed at addressing and reducing systemic inequities will have deleterious effects for America's economic competitiveness.

The issue facing the realization of increased global competitiveness through an increasingly college-educated populace is the on-going cycle of affective poverty. Since its inception, higher education in the U.S. has been disproportionately stratified by race and socioeconomic status (SES) (Thelin, 2004; Anderson, 1988). Educational reparations such as desegregation mandates and financial reform legislation have addressed the stratification to some extent; however, race and SES continue to be an impediment to a recent Federal Government initiative to produce the most college graduates by the year 2020 (Schneider & Yin, 2011). Statistics show that students with low socioeconomic and minority status are more than three times as likely as their peers to dropout, at the high school level (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2010) and twice as likely to dropout and not reenroll at the college level (NCES, 2010b). Action is needed that will decrease the factors that contribute to the academic achievement gap between these students and their peers (Bergerson, 2009), if the U.S. is to realize its longstanding goal of creating a society that is more just for all, and meet a future goal of asserting its global competitiveness by producing the most college graduates.

Subversive to this reform agenda is the historic axiological public/private binary which frames a school's function as an educational institution and, equally as narrow, frames the function of the home as the premier site of social services. This results in the eclipsing of community partners whom can mediate the two. Specifically, schools are becoming increasingly more standardized amidst a climate of accountability, and families are increasingly charged with endowing children with necessary developmental dispositions to function in a global economy,

amidst the constraints of a recession. For working class youth this schema can pose a conundrum, as the opportunities to develop the experiential knowledge which leads to developmental efficacy become virtually non-existent between such stringently delineated boundaries.

The term “at-risk” is typically used to define students who have the propensity of dropping out of high school before graduation, and/or students who fail to meet basic proficiency standards in mathematics or reading by the eighth grade (NCES, 1992). Demographic information shows that Blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans are more likely to be deficient in reading and math skills and are more likely to drop out between 8th and 10th grades (NCES, 1992). Similarly, when race and socioeconomic status are controlled for, the rates at which minorities drop out are no longer statistically different from their White counterparts. Thus, race and SES are two important factors to consider as reference points in inquiries in school attrition discussions.

Other predictors for dropping out are largely behavioral or social/environmental. Behavioral dropout predictors include: a) Students who had repeated grades, students with histories of poor math and English grades, students who did little homework; Students who often came to class unprepared for classwork, students who often cut class, students who frequently cut class or were tardy for school; Students whose teachers thought they were passive, disruptive, inattentive, or thought they were underachievers; and Students who are first generation students (NCES, 1992; Bergerson, 2010; Bell, Rowan-Kenyon, & Perna, 2009; Rowan-Kenyon, Bell, & Perna, 2008).

Social/environmental dropout predictors include: a) Students who come from single-parent families, are over age from their peer group, students who frequently changed schools; b) Students

whose parents were not actively involved in their school, students whose parents never talked to them about school-related matters, students whose parents held low expectations about their child's educational attainment; c) Students from urban schools with large minority populations (NCES, 1992; Bergeron, 2009; Bell, Rowan-Kenyon, & Perna, 2009; Rowan-Kenyon, Bell, & Perna, 2008). An understanding of the social/environmental and behavioral predictors of a dropout culture presents a focalized starting point for targeting and addressing the needs of this population (Hammond, Linton, Smink, & Drew, 2007).

Factors Affecting At-Risk Students

Low SES degree aspirations

Because at risk students disproportionately come from low SES backgrounds, and are more susceptible to school attrition, when and if, they do matriculate to college and persist, it happens at lower rates than their high SES peers. Before college participation (e.g., entrance, matriculation, and persistence) of at-risk students can be addressed, it is important to understand the educational aspirations of high schoolers which lend themselves to a greater understanding of their college enrollment process, matriculation, and the development of persistence habits.

According to the NCES (2006) postsecondary aspirations survey, low SES students vary from their high SES counterparts in terms of educational aspirations. Specifically, in 2004, just over half (51%) of high school seniors from low SES backgrounds aspired to attain a bachelors or graduate degree compared to their middle (67%) and high (87%) SES peers' degree aspirations, respectively (NCES, 2006). Further, the study found high school seniors' expectations of graduate school attendance, "were positively related to their academic preparation and experiences, including mathematics coursetaking and proficiency, never repeating a grade, and taking college entrance examinations" (NCES, 2006; p. 60), factors which have already been

shown to be predictive of dropout culture. While aspirations and actual *outcomes* are two different factors, the research shows that student aspirations are strongly related to the material practices that serve to reify aspirations, highlighting the significance of the role aspirations and experience, play in creating a pathway to college (Toldson, Braithwaite, & Rentie, 2009).

School resources

Students' decisions to attend college are influenced by many factors that begin early in a student's life. Reasons commonly cited in the literature are family background, parental encouragement, school context, academic ability, peer influence, and information about postsecondary options (Bergerson, 2010). An absence of financial aid literacy greatly influences students' awareness about their options of attending college (Bell, Rowan-Kenyon, & Perna, 2009; Elliot, 2008), in fact, financial literacy knowledge has been found to be the leading factor in students' decisions to enroll (Noel-Levitz, 2007). Because schools are largely considered agents of socialization (Apple, 2009), schools contribute greatly to students' perceptions of pathways to college. Specifically, in Louisiana, the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) working in conjunction with area high schools, is a college scholarship program whose bestowment is contingent upon successful completion of a core high school curriculum. This systemic conduit of linearity between state agency and the public sector, culminating in access to college, is directly linked to filling the gap of "college knowledge" which students lack (Bell, Rowan-Kenyon, & Perna, 2009). However, school administrators play a large role in the facilitation of college knowledge, disadvantaging status students who are at lower resource schools (Bergerson, 2010). Perna and Thomas (2008) suggest understanding the multilevel contexts which affect student college aspirations and subsequently influence enrollment, ranging from the micro level (family and friends), the exo level (school influence) to the macro level

(policies and institutional cultures which directly impact the other levels) in hopes of promoting systemic change. Unfortunately, while schools are improving the educational quality for college-bound students, it is suggested the needs for at risk students are not being met (Knowles & Knowles, 2010; West-Olatunji et al., 2010).

Parental educational attainment and income level

Students whose unique risks make them more susceptible to low college enrollment or dropping out are typically defined as students from families with low incomes, students whose parents did not attend college, or students whose parents work lower class occupations (Walpole, 2007; Bergerson, 2010). Trends of the enrollment patterns and persistence of minorities show disparities among race and socioeconomic status. The 2008-2009 Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study describes the enrollment and employment rates of a national sample of college graduates who completed a bachelors degree in 2008-2009. Minority students led disproportionately in low socioeconomic status of their parents, as evidenced by their parent's educational attainment. Blacks (33.3%), Hispanics (36.5%), were twice as likely to come from families with parents achieving high school or less educational attainment at greater rates, as opposed to Whites (16.4%) (NCES, 2011, table 1). Similarly, minorities also lag in levels of parental attainment of graduate degrees, Blacks (19.8%), Hispanics (19.9%), versus their White (31.9%) peers, with the exception of Asians (36.3%).

Psychosocial Factors Affecting Youths' Decision-Making Capabilities

Educational myopia

Piaget's developmental theory suggests that adolescents in the formal concrete stage are able to think abstractly, though it is contended that some never fully reach this stage. This short

sidedness of vision, or inability to conceptualize beyond immediate circumstances is congruent with Gottfredson's (2004) claim that adolescent children circumscribe their career options based on their immediate contexts. Research also shows that students with lower cognitive achievement levels lose interest in school and optimism about their academic abilities (Walston & Rathbun, 2007). Oreopoulos (2007) suggests that educational myopia causes teenagers to forego the health, wealth, and happiness payout that an extra year of schooling can provide in the long run. In other words, certain teenagers, due to their short sidedness in vision and developmental stages, do not understand the long term benefits, or economic returns, associated with completing high school. It may be beneficial to understand educational myopia when thinking about the curricular needs of youth in better relating education to their immediate and possible long term contexts.

Self-esteem

The literature suggests that psychosocial measures of low self-esteem can lead to dropping out. Brown and Rodriguez (2009) found that educational neglect and, socially and intellectually alienated students dropped out of school, highlighting the fact that schooling conditions affect both the psychosocial development of students and subsequent actions such as dropping out. Higher parental involvement is associated with greater levels of self-esteem in adolescents (Bulanda & Majumdar, 2009). However, Gibson (2006) found that relationships with peers, mentors, and specific community groups are related positively to adolescents' self-concept. Myers, Willse, and Villalba (2011) found that wellness factors are predictive of self-esteem in adolescents. Hutz, Martin and Beitel (2007) suggest that a perceived environmental fit (a person's general sense of belongingness within a particular environment) can influence self-esteem in minorities and contribute to lower levels of college environment adjustment. In

addition, school based extracurricular participation can be beneficial to students from different social backgrounds if those activities reflect self-concept and skill sets that remain relevant beyond school (Kort-Butler & Hagewen, 2011). Searcy (2007) suggests that self-esteem is developed through associations, activities, and aurally. According to the literature then, self-esteem is a psychosocial dynamic that can change in accordance to specific social structures and interactions and can influence lifestyle choices.

Mentoring

Mentoring can be beneficial to low SES youth. Research shows that resilient youth who overcome at-risk backgrounds consistently have mentors (Rhodes & Dubois, 2006). They list the benefits of mentoring: improvements in self-esteem, better interpersonal relationships, greater school connectedness, improved academic performance, and reductions in substance use, violence, and other at risk behaviors (Rhodes & Dubois, 2006). Hurd and Zimmerman (2010) found low SES students who have a natural mentor to have positive health outcomes in their transitions to adulthood; specifically, they experience less depressive symptoms and less sexual risk behavior over time. They found that natural mentoring relationships contributed to the resilience of low SES African American youth transitioning into adulthood, by moderating the stress associated with the transition to adulthood (Hurd & Zimmerman, 2010). Erickson, McDonald, and Elder (2009) found a strong positive impact of mentoring on high school performance and educational attainment. While Erickson et. al (2009) found that “relatives, friends, teachers, and community-based mentors” contribute to educational success, they also note that youth with more cultural “resources to draw upon” are more likely to engage in mentoring relationships (p. 345). A literature review of over 300 articles on mentoring showed that mentoring provides a host of learning, professional growth, and developmental benefits

(Hansford, Ehrich, & Tennent, 2004), however, short term mentoring has been shown to neither positively nor negatively impact at-risk student behavior (NCEE, 2009). Research suggests that early educational interventions in the lives of at-risk youth increase the chances of school completion, decrease juvenile delinquency and school dropout; and is associated with better educational and social outcomes up to age 20 (Reynolds, Temple, Robertson, & Mann, 2001).

Financial Ramifications of Dropping Out

The cost of dropping out

The high rate at which low SES students drop out of college has larger implications for the state and national economy. College graduates earn more money, on average, than do college drop outs (NCES, 2011). These higher earnings translate to higher income tax payments and tax revenues that contribute to federal and state level fiscal sovereignty. Hence, calls for a more educated workforce ultimately benefit the individual person, the state, and the federal government. Conversely, dropping out of college has deleterious effects on estimated revenues. Taxpayers spend millions of dollars in grant appropriations to support students through college. Research shows that students who drop out during their first year of college cost the state \$1.3 billion dollars, and the federal government an additional \$300 million per year (Schneider & Yin, 2011), due to loss of income tax revenue from the higher earning status of four year degree holding students. This further challenges the nation's aim at being globally competitive. As such, at the state level, action must be taken to support the enrollment, and persistence of students who are at risk for dropping out and costing the state and federal government billions in revenue.

Health

Freudenberg and Ruglis (2007) state, "Education is one of the strongest predictors of health: the more schooling people have the better their health is likely to be. . . evidence suggests

that education exerts the strongest influence on health” (p. 1). Indeed, the research suggests that race and a low SES background are associated with a shorter lifespan and increased risk of becoming disabled, when charting the relationship between health and wealth (Deaton, 2002). Dropping out of school has a significant causal effect on increasing the risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases (Anderson & Pörtner, 2011); and increases the risk of cardiovascular disease (Winkleby, Jatulis, Frank, & Fortmann, 1992); and an overall unhealthy lifestyle in association with low coping mechanisms (Pampel, Krueger, & Denney, 2010). School achievement, attendance, and involvement reduce the risk of pregnancy (Perper, Peterson, & Manlove, 2010). Securing the mental health of students has been positively associated with a host of outcomes including: fewer behavioral disruptions, increased school engagement, better academic performance, and higher graduation rates (Walker, Kerns, Lyon, Bruns, & Cosgrove, 2009).

Deviance

Low education increases the likelihood of incarceration (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2006). In 1997, about two-quarters of the Nation’s State and Federal Prison incarcerates had not completed high school, with 34.9% attributing school attrition to behavioral or academic problems and disinterest; and minoritized populations reported being less educated than their white peers (Harlow, 2003). A dropout costs the state about \$240,000 in lifetime tax contributions (NCES, 2010), however, according to Lochner and Moretti (2003), a 1% increased high school completion rate of all men would save the U.S. about 1.4 billion in reduced costs from crime. Harlow (2003) estimates that it costs \$26,000 to maintain a prisoner. Conversely, public colleges spend about \$25,000 per student, yearly (Baum & Payea, 2005).

Addressing College Aspirations through College and Career Readiness

Again, low SES high school students have lower (50%) aspirations of achieving bachelor's degrees than their high SES peers (NCES, 2006). If and when low SES students enroll in a college, a 30% gap exists between the rate at which they enroll and persist through four year institutions, compared to their high SES peers (Walpole, 2007). How soon should children begin thinking about college? The American Council on Education (ACE) suggests that parents discuss career and college options as early as elementary and middle school (www.acenet.edu). The Council also recommends enrollment in college preparatory middle schools which can increase the likelihood of meeting college preparatory high school entrance criteria. The Council's formative suggestions have twofold implications for understanding the specific actions that lead to knowledge about postsecondary options and career readiness.

The Council's suggestions are consistent with developmental literature concerning students and the immediate contexts which can influence or hinder their development, in particular, college and career readiness (Young, 1983). Mijares (2007) defines college readiness as "knowledge, skills, and behaviors" (p. 1) which are operationalized through completion of a core curriculum, higher order thinking as evidenced by advanced placement classes, and college planning skills. Moreover, Mijares contends that college readiness underscores career success. Young (1983) utilizes an approach based on ecosystems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) to explain the hierarchically embedded nature of social and structural influences on adolescent career development. He defines career development as a person's "growing capacity... to understand and act on a career environment" (Young, 1983, p. 401). Young suggests the two innermost influences on adolescent aspirations of college or future trade education are the home and school environments, with high schools exerting what should be a "great deal of influence on the career development of adolescents" (p. 404). According to Young, two characteristics of high

schools in their direct function of preparing youth for life and work, are influencing students explicitly through career counseling interventions at the individual and group levels and also implicitly at the school organizational, activity, and curricular levels (see also Curry, Binns, & Belser, in press).

Yet, what happens when schools are increasingly in under-resourced areas and find themselves balancing scant per-pupil expenditures with large populations of at risk students? Gottfredson (2004) argues that vocational choice is “culturally contingent and experience-dependent” (p. 7) suggesting for example, there would be no loan officers or astronauts in a place which little valued money or knowledge of the sciences. Additionally, Gottfredson (2004) suggests there is much linearity between adolescents’ locale, the experiential knowledge they glean through familial and community experience, and taken together, these considerations temper their future aspirations. How are adolescent aspirations constrained when high-poverty communities transmit a certain type of knowledge to their adolescents?

The narrow framing of poverty as merely an economic issue, obscures expanded notions of poverty to include experiential, intellectual, social, and moral dimensions. Poverty is not simply an absence of finances. Nor should a conception of poverty be understood as a top-down or bottom-up phenomena. It is not relegated to a specific race, population, or SES status. It should however, be perceived as dialogical, that is, relational. Expanded dimensions of poverty enable creative, multifaceted solutions to addressing educational disparities.

Transgression of local boundaries should occur frequently in the area of work readiness and neighborhood residential mobility. The residential mobility of working class, single-parent female-headed families is often confined to local contexts, often spanning a distance of a block or a nearby neighborhood (Cochran, Lerner, Riley, Gunnarsson, & Henderson, 1990).

Neighborhoods have the potentiality to translate “socioeconomic resources...into social opportunities or constraints” (Cochran et al., 1990, p. 295). As educational attainment levels rise, so do opportunities to cross geospatial boundaries and with it increased opportunities for socialization. Work readiness is an area in which to foster spatial mobility. As neighborhoods tend to be sharply divided by race and SES, viable employment opportunities can be realized by the community only through a public sector commitment to urban renewal in impoverished areas and simultaneously the private sector commitment of local industries to dedicate internships to low opportunity students. An opportune time for dedicated internships (apprenticeships) is during the summer months, when low opportunity students are more likely to experience losses in math and reading. The ability to transgress cultural boundaries comes with a price-tag of community commitment and the singular belief that an educated populace benefits the entire state economy.

What are the experiences of urban, low income youth and through what systemic processes do opportunities for experiential knowledge emerge for youth labeled at risk?

CHAPTER 1: WRITING IN MY FATHER'S NAME

What's in a Name?

No book exists by itself, it is always in a relation of support and dependence vis-à-vis other books; it is a point in a network – it contains a system of indications that point, explicitly or implicitly, to other books, other texts, or other sentences...and consequently cannot be described except from out of a discursive field (Foucault, 1998, p. 304).

We carry around our stories like burdens upon the head. These burdens tell of whom we are, of where we have been, and possibly hint towards where we are going. Everyone knows that a *good* story has a beginning, middle, and an end. It is no wonder then, that we recycle and restory the Greek hero stories, Aesop's fables, and Shakespearian plays. These stories captivate our attention, supply finality, and encompass an underlying principle or two. In fact, stories which stray from this plotline, sit uneasy with the listener, whose desire for finality or a sense of completion, goes unassuaged. And yet, I¹ am no stranger to the emotional dissonance conferred by an unresolved plotline.

As is typical of the descendants of colonized peoples, I cannot trace with certainty the roots of my family tree. I can tell you that, more than likely, I originated from a group of displaced West Africans, who were made to recognize America as home and servitude as their livelihood. I can also tell you that, on my maternal side, American Indians, Caucasians, and African Americans were more than intimately acquainted, in spite of existing social mores. One persisting story is of my mother's maternal great-grandmother, whose immortalized seat on the porch always prefaces her description. Her name was *Char* (short for Charlotte) but it was

¹ Narrative research often requires the researcher to make explicit her orientation to the project. Because this project explores the discourse of family as experienced in a dropout prevention program, I disclose narratives about my own

pronounced “Shah,” probably due to the French-inspired accent of her Creole husband. As my mother recounts memories of Shah, the image I get is that of a woman sitting on the porch of a clapboard house. She wears a long, silky braid on either side of her head. She eats dry shrimp and drinks gin, when not smoking from her pipe. She drinks Louisiana coffee from a metal cup. I imagine her face to resemble supple, darkened leather. From what I gather of my mother’s story, Shah’s peaceful demeanor was inviting, yet her French Creole accent was lost on my mother, precluding the possibility of communication.

What I understood as a child of Shah’s strong presence, I now understand as an adult the significance of Shah’s posturing by my mother as a “strong” figure. Shah’s posturing fits in with typical stories of the way my mother views her family story, one in which strength and bravado play central roles. My mother’s identity has been constituted through this narrative; she frequently articulates these characteristics and evokes them to substantiate her ways of knowing. In the storying and restorying of this narrative there is something of completeness in her identity, in this portion of her tale.

However, a question to my father regarding his paternal grandparents yielded no such colorful stories. He recalls being a young, young boy the last time he visited his paternal grandparents. His father’s full-time occupation as a traveling minister across southern states, kept him busy in a flurry of endeavors. In addition to ministering in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama, my grandfather would also lend his vocals (and act as group manager) to The Original Five Blind Boys of Alabama’s (1993) song “Sermon”, the Hawks (a Hollygrove, New Orleans gospel quartet, previously known as the Humming Four), and the Soproco Singers (Thomas, 2012). And yet, as if knowing that my grandfather had somewhat of a national presence against

family. For other examples of narrative situatedness see other narrative projects: Huber (2008), Wang (2001), or Phillion (1999).

the backdrop of the segregated south wasn't enough, I needed more. What could I know of his grandfather, my great- great-grandfather? And how might knowing this story help me to story my identity, for better or worse? Unlike my mother, my father didn't posture himself in any certain way. He was an excellent provider, but I don't recall him evoking familiar figures of yesteryear to give meaning to his present day understandings. The history of his family remained a mystery. And yet, could this *absence* of his storied identity mirror the paucity of information surrounding my paternal great grandfather, and great-great grandfather?

I was interested in a name – a signifier – that would speak to me of who I was and of where I'd come from, as if the stable coordinates of my street address, the one at which I'd lived for most of my childhood, wasn't already indicative enough of who I was, or where I'd come from. There was no crest, signifying to me, cultural capital, nothing to situate me in space, and place, and time. There were hardly any stories. Yet, there was always *the* story, the burden, I carried like a basket on my head, that of the last name, *Exkano*, the one with no history. I always felt like I was writing in my father's name (Behar, 1995) only with invisible ink. Being the second-born of two daughters, there exists the possibility that I will one day exchange my name for another. That day will necessarily mean gaining a new name, and silencing the old one. And yet, in the tradition of remembering, and by extension acknowledging, the ones who came before (Asante, 1987, 2007; Mazama, 2003) herein rests my desire to seek out the plotlines that create families' stories to live by².

Familial Plotlines in Educative Spaces

I am sitting in the game room of a male dormitory, situated on a large college campus. Sam sits adjacent to me on a three person sofa, while I occupy an armchair. Despite the large

plasma flatscreen TV. on the center wall broadcasting a sports show, and fellow dorm mates seated around, Sam and I have been having a conversation for the last several minutes.

Sam: My brother's been locked up for 8 years but he's getting out soon; he's a convicted felon. While he was in prison he gave me his car. It's a Cutlass. I'm gonna fix it up – one of the rims needs to be replaced, but that's expensive...

Me: You know, for the \$300 you're going to spend on one rim, you can spend the same amount to buy four new tires for the car. And then you'll have transportation.

Sam: *[Looking out into the distance and then shaking his head in agreement]* Yeah – that makes sense.

Me: And then you can get around town.

Sam: You know what? No one's ever told me that before.

A few minutes later...

Me: What if your brother wants his car back once he's out?

Sam: My brother's not an Indian giver. Besides, the answer will be "No!" My mama also has a Maxima, and a Tahoe. The Maxima just sits in the driveway.

Me: Your mom lets you drive the Tahoe?

Sam: Only to the mailbox. The Tahoe is really my stepdad's. My mom doesn't work. She stays at home all day. She says she's a stay-at-home mom. At school, when she fills out forms she puts *[scribbling in the air]* "stay-at-home mom" as her job.

Me: My mom is a stay-at-home mom, also. *[Silence.]* But I bet your dad isn't a truck driver like my dad is?

Sam: *[Momentarily thinking.]* Actually he is. He works for Braeborne. *[Seeing my disbelief, he exclaims, "No, really, he is a truck driver!"]*

Me: Oh okay.

Sam: Me and you have a lot in common.

Me: Yeah, we do.

[memory reconstruction³ written field notes]

² Clandinin & Connelly (2000) suggest that "experience is the stories people live" (p. xxvi). Personal experience becomes the 'vantage point' from which to explore social phenomena. The stories people live and tell have educative capacities.

³ Marilyn Huber (2008) defines a memory reconstruction as a "field text which is a remembered reconstruction of an earlier event or situation (p. 1).

Because family is so central to our identities, to our naming, they largely contour our ways of knowing the world. Whether we choose to relive those plotlines as adults, or silence certain ways of knowing, this action is always done *in relation to* our childhood experiences as participants of the family structure. Villiers-Botha & Cilliers (2010) explain that our lives as texts come into being in existing networks, networks which constrain certain possibilities, ultimately functioning as experiential frames of reference. To reference the quote at the chapter's beginning:

No book exists by itself, it is always in a relation of support and dependence vis-à-vis other books; it is a point in a network – it contains a system of indications that point, explicitly or implicitly, to other books, other texts, or other sentences...and consequently cannot be described except from out of a discursive field (Foucault, 1998, p. 304).

However they eschew a deterministic view of the family. The relational self, they argue, is both agent *and* actor in a complex system. Identity then, can be likened to “a narrative distilled from the multiplicity of possibilities available from the world of experience” (Villiers-Botha & Cilliers, 2010, p. 35). Personal narratives intersect with social narratives.

Sam and I shared something of similarity in our backgrounds as children of working-class parents. However, the difference which existed on the day of our chat was that I was a researcher seeking out youths' stories to live by and Sam was a participant in an alternative organization program (operationalized as a summer program), for youth placed at risk for failing high school. This program had an emphasis on high school completion and college and career readiness, and could be characterized as a relational program effectuated through discourses of family, belongingness, and security. Would Sam's and many other students' inclusion into another “family” interrupt their stories to live by and contribute to different plotlines than dominant social narratives suggest? If our families contribute to our identities, and

simultaneously our existing networks largely constrain possibilities, what opportunities exist at the intersections between the two? How might alternative notions of family interrupt static educational narratives which pit family against state?

Identifying the Problem

In this inquiry into the discourses of experience in an alternative organization program, I pose the following research questions:

1. What discourses inform the narrative of an alternative organization program in a state institution?
2. How does language as a discourse practice inform reality for student participants?

Louisiana State Youth Opportunities Unlimited (LSYOU) is a nationally recognized, long-term, case-managed support system, for youth labeled at risk for dropping out of high school. In this study I examine how at risk is dually constituted as a discursive formation in the context of a dropout prevention program⁴, and also in the lives of student participants. To explore how at risk as a discourse is lived, negotiated, and (re)defined, I place student narratives alongside program narratives, and I weave together public and private discourses that inform taken-for-granted notions of experience. I suggest that at risk is a social construct and its meaning is subject to negotiation. I show how *naming* is a discursive act situated in circuit-relations of power (Foucault, 1977). Finally, a poststructural critique informs this study offering as analytic map, a way to understand language as a function of discourse practices providing

⁴ Drawing upon Villiers-Botha & Cilliers (2010) notion that “An organization would do well to keep its employees’ broader context (narrative) in mind and not to operate based on the fiction that that one’s work self can be segregated from the rest of one’s identity. These will always inevitably affect one another, sometimes to the benefit of the company, sometimes not,” (p. 37) in Chapter 5 I undertake the task of understanding the ways in which the program is constituted relationally as ethical subject. They suggest that “ethics constitutes the person or organization to a great extent” (p. 38). How does a state institution functioning in discursive discourse of ethics complicate notions of state, self, and other?

discursive analyses through which the complex, multiple, and contradictory nature of experience can be known. Implications exist for clearly delineating the discourse practices that inform institutional and individual narratives, and in doing so implicate the dialogical imperative of understanding each other's "language of interaction"⁵ in the negotiation of experience for public sphere participation in a democratic society.

In this chapter, 1) I introduce a poststructural framework in a discussion of conceptualizing experience as both informing and being informed by interacting relationship networks. 2) I offer a landscape of the LSYOU model, 3) highlight the problem by engaging briefly in discussion of how dominate discourses constitute a totalizing narrative of "at risk" identity as the student's issue rather than a systems issue; I do this by situating student and institutional narratives at the center of discursive analysis rather than the larger, social, cultural system. 4) I then outline my plan of study, 5) explain my method, and 6) conclude by discussing the limitations of the study.

Locating the necessity of experiential narratives

Experience matters. It is precisely because "we cannot be born pre-programmed with an inherent idea of what it means to be human and how we have to be to get on in the world" (Villiers-Botha & Cilliers, 2010, p. 33) that a focus on experience becomes critical to social science projects. Experience explains *how* we come to know the world. Taken further, it is believed that experience can be miseducative, noneducative, or educative (Dewey, 1938), extending experience into the realm of the political through value judgments which call into question issues of normality, a subtle apparatus of positivistic rationality discourse. In fact, one's

⁵ The language of interaction is a term I use to denote the ideological and material inscriptions of experience that inform how we engage in public and private contexts. One needn't share race, ethnicity, religious creed, etc. to understand the language of interaction, only the ethical responsibility to reflect and interact in a manner that does not dishonor a conversant's interaction language. I unpack this idea more in later chapters.

perceived quality of existential conditions is precisely the impetus to understand how one's interaction with their environment contours their perceptions. To that end, we should take into account, experience, and just when we think we understand it, we should try to begin understanding it all over again. We are all "at risk" of mis-interpretation.

Gayatri Spivak (1993) critiquing the Western desiring appetite which seeks to control the production of experience through a political economy of value-coding which exercises power of defining the center, and thus controlling the limits of discourse, engenders the historical colonial narrative of the reproductive freedom of the White male patriarch to produce and reproduce subject identities. Spivak suggests "reversing, displacing, and seizing the apparatus of value-coding" (p. 63) as a means of negotiating identity, through the "persistent critique of what one must inhabit" (p. 61). A persistent critique eschews essentialist notions of experience which typically operate as economies of power. To this end, I resist easy essentialisms and the reproductive hierarchies they engender. I reject the historical legacy that presents at risk as an already-unwrapped gift, one that presents itself as a self-evident truth. I consider my participants' experiences through multiple shifting displacements, considering their conscription into stigmatized identity, while being within the center of a discursive educational structure, LSYOU at the institutional level, and in the center of the larger societal deficit narrative which they must inhabit. Micro and macro system knowledge converge and collide with notions of private and public. Collected data include interviews as examination of participants' stories, which may present "catechesis," defined as, "a concept-metaphor without an adequate referent," (p. 60) perhaps offering interpretations of experience as floating signifiers in discursive networks.

At risk is a social construct⁶ into which students are conscripted, which marginalizes them from mainstream discourses of normality, and while emphasizing the incongruence of students' behaviors to dominant socio-cultural structures, does little to challenge the structures with which the students find themselves at odds. I suggest that not only is at risk a social construct but that it functions more insidiously as an apparatus of an educational political economy whose desiring appetite needed to fill the void of a societal "other" at the dawn of modern educational reform. While the language of at risk has changed, I argue that the structures which perpetuate the at risk fiction, remain unchanged. Further, I question, what assumptions belie the at risk narrative? *Who's* at risk? And at risk for *what*? The curriculum theorizing literature theorizes at the expense of engaging student perspectives in localized contexts, specifically students of color, on how they come to know, understand, and interpret cultural underpinnings of their experiences, and further, how these negotiations mitigate their journey from private to public spaces. Thus, this project is a deconstructive project of "at risk" as a socio-political discourse language and practice. That is, it seeks to displace meanings associated with the master words "at-risk" to identify and critique how the center identifies, names, and essentializes marginality, but additionally through an understanding of the discursive constructions that allow for catachrestic interpretations.

A Landscape: LSYOU and a Curriculum of Support

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, poverty, low educational attainment, health, juvenile delinquency rates, and economic competitiveness are strongly interrelated; the systemic

⁶ For an example of the social construction of identity, Erevelles (2005) traces the construction of normality discourse, as she examines relationships between 'disabled' and 'normal.' Normalizing and totaling discourses must be challenged by a reconstitution of the ability to recognize how the center marginalizes, names, and constitutes subjects.

effects of poverty and educational attainment implicate the entire community. For students in East Baton Rouge Parish (EBRP), families and schools are complicit in educational success. In EBRP 75% of students are considered at risk. In a high poverty district such as EBRP, students reported fewer school opportunities for pro-social involvement existed at school (Baton Rouge Area Chamber, 2006). Additionally, only 47% of EBR sixth graders reported feeling that they were a valuable member of their family (BRAC, 2006). Further, EBRP is considered a “C” district, that is, “the letter grade indicates that between one-third and one-fourth of students are below “basic,” meaning they lack the fundamental skills and knowledge for the next level of schooling” (BRAC, 2013, p. 2). Community partner support is necessary to fill in the gaps which exist between public and private.

LSYOU is located in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, on the campus of Louisiana State University, and is operated through the College of Human Sciences and Education. The LSYOU mission is to offer long-term, case-managed support to high need students. LSYOU serves students from EBRP, Tangipahoa Parish (St. Helena, East Feliciana, & West Feliciana), West Baton Rouge, and the Recovery School District (their respective district school scores rank “C,” “D,” “F,” “A,” “B,” and “F,” from midrange to worst performing schools; additionally many of these are high poverty districts) through cohorts which support students from their summer year preceding ninth grade until they graduate from high school. A nonprofit program, LSYOU is funded by multiple sources including: The Louisiana Department of Education Recovery School District; The Louisiana Department of Education Summer Food Service Program; The Workforce Investment Agency Area 20 (Tangipahoa Consortium); The AT&T Foundation; and The Claude B. and Irene W. Pennington Foundation. Through the support of sponsoring agencies, students are given the opportunity over the summer to live on a college dorm in

campus dormitories, work in campus jobs, and to tour college campuses. During the four-year component of academic support, students receive tutoring, counseling, and mentoring. Dedicated transportation is always provided to and from campus events.

This research delves into the social and cultural landscape of LSYOU, a program designed to narrow the achievement gap for students placed at risk for dropping out of high school, by teaching them skills needed to become employable and contributing members of society in preparation of high school and beyond. LSYOU is a relational program, with theoretical underpinnings of participative management, characterized by supportive leadership, teamwork, shared decision making, high trust, a horizontal and vertical flow of communication (Gaston, 1987). The LSYOU program, conceived as the dissertation work of Dr. Suzan Gaston (1988), and continuously operational by her and staff, and privately funded since its conception originally functioned as “a dropout prevention program, operating as a summer school, that has an organizational structure based on the participative management style, ...will facilitate the acquiring of coping skills,... by students who have been identified as potential dropouts” (Gaston, 1986, p. 12). The intentionality of the LSYOU structure with a curriculum aiming to facilitate coping-acquisition skills seemed to suggest an implied social contract between the organization and its participants. As an alternative educational structure, LSYOU existed as a margin within the center of educational organizational discourse. To that end, as a discursive educational formation governed by an alternative organization, it could provide a critique of educational discourses and the organizing principles through which notions of normality are constructed (Winnfield, 2007).

Program Description

While LSYOU is a long-term support intervention for high need students, there are two components of the program. The summer component is conducted on the campus of Louisiana State University and is characterized by a six week, “24 hours per day, seven days per week,” residential stay in a college dormitory (LSU College of Education Pamphlet). During the summer component students are immersed in academics, counseling, work experience, character development, mentoring, and recreational activities, in an effort to promote “an environment that emphasizes family, security, and a sense of belonging” (LSU College of Education, Pamphlet). The second component is the school-year component, “an intense intervention,” followed by “an individualized support system” available to students until graduation. Support services include “exit test preparation, mentoring, personal and family counseling, weekend retreats on the LSU campus, and tutoring” (LSU College of Education, Pamphlet). This research focuses on the summer component of the program.

An Intentional Curriculum

The summer program is the most integral part of the program as it cements the foundation of support. The structure of the summer program is inherently relational. Staff are selected upon their potentiality to display elements of participative management style. Staff subsequently undergoes training with an emphasis on centering the experiences of student participants. Concepts of belongingness are interwoven into the program’s structure. Students are always already part of a group; and matriculate with their respective groups through classes and recreational activities.

There are:

Dormitory groups

Boys and girls live in separate dormitories. A dormitory peer counselor is assigned to small groups consisting of four or five students. As students spend the evenings and weekends under the supervision of their peer counselors, students become intimately acquainted with their peer counselors, some going to lengths of referring to them by descriptive names like, “Mama” (Personal conversation with a peer counselor).

Class groups

Class groups consist of 4 cohorts of approximately 11 students who find themselves in one of two sections of Math, or English/Language Arts. Class groups are always under the tutelage of one teacher and one aide. Class sessions are attended Monday – Thursday and last for an hour and thirty minutes. Additionally, students enroll in health and wellness counseling classes in which they learn mainly about alcohol and drugs, family, anger/self-control, teen abstinence, etiquette and dress, nutrition, yoga-relaxation, and home activities (LSYOU Family/Student Manual, 2012).

Work Readiness groups

Students have the opportunity to spend 2 hours Monday – Thursday, “shadowing” a job to learn “how to be successful in getting and keeping a job” (LSYOU Family/Student Manual, 2012, p. 12). One work readiness counselor is assigned to students (an approximate 1 to 10 ratio) to provide them with support and serve as liaison between the student and the department in which they gain work experience. Work experience included, but was not limited to, administrative, laboratory, facility services, and campus departmental assistance. Students received hands-on experience “acting out fake telephone calls, completely filling out job applications, completely filling out time sheets” while learning about positive behavior skills, in

addition to learning about communication skills (LSYOU News, July, 2012, p. 2). At the end of the summer students received the opportunity to nominate their “bosses” for Boss of the Summer.

Each dormitory, class, and work readiness group has a name which takes its cue from national football and baseball teams. This scope and pervasiveness, that is, the amount of time students spend together doing the same kinds of activities for the greater part of the day explains how “bonds are formed as the groups move from place to place” (Gaston, 2011, personal communication). Each students’ access to a team consisting of either, a work readiness counselor, teacher, dorm counselor, and recreational counselor serves as a continuous web of student support in tandem with the students’ residential stay on the college campus, which conjointly supports LSYOU’s mission of an environment emphasizing family, security, and a sense of belonging.

Specific attention in this dissertation is paid to the intersectionality of student identity, lived experience, and how these coincide in the experiencing of place (LSYOU). Understanding narratives surrounding sense-making processes in the experiencing of place has striking implications for curricular, pedagogical, and structural educational practices.

Attending to Language as Discursive Practice

A discourse is defined as “language use as a social practice” (Rogers et al., 2005, p. 369) in which discourses can be understood as organizing principles for systems of intelligibility. Asante (1987) echoes the regulating function of discourse, “Certain kinds of information can be acquired if we employ certain kinds of theoretical rules” (p. 21), thus suggesting that discourses function as knowledge regulators. Social constructivism assumes that reality is constructed by language. Central to this poststructural project is the role of language in shaping experience.

Poststructuralism posits the “social nature of language and the arbitrariness of the sign” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 70), that is to say, language and reality are fluid concepts situated in historical, unstable, and contingent structures, a critique of centers and origins with their historically legacy to control knowledge production. Asante (1987) notes, “rhetorical condition...is the source of the subtle machinations of power and manipulation of words and lesser forms,” (p. 24) he is critiquing the power of the speaker to control the limits of conversation, the limits of discourse, as language is predicated upon the reception and transmission of signals rooted in power and cultural relationships. It is the poststructuralist agenda then to look for what is concealed, repressed, or pushed away within the maneuvering processes of the center” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 38). Poststructuralism’s critique of structuralism is in its ability to define “stable centers, origins, and foundations” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 70), in order to delegitimize the power of the center. Foucault critiquing the hegemony of a unifying signifier suggests, “the problem is no longer one of tradition, of tracing a line, but one of division, of limits” (Foucault, 1972, p. 5). As an historical practice, *events* have marked the “limit[s] of what can be thought,” (De Certeau, 1988, p. 83) establishing the rules for discourse.

Foucault (1980) admonishes that it is:

not a matter of locating everything on one level, that of the event, but of realizing that there are actually a whole order of levels of different types of events differing in amplitude, chronological breadth, and capacity to produce effects. The problem is at once to distinguish among events, to differentiate the networks and levels to which they belong, and to reconstitute the lines along which they are connected and engender one another (p. 114).

Discourse analyses attempt to understand less the event but how in its ‘amplitude, chronological breadth, and capacity’ subject positions are created, how events function in different discourse communities, living within discursive practices, that is, existing within contexts “of anonymous

historical rules, always determined in the time and space that have defined a given period, and for a given social, economic, geographical or linguistic area...” (Foucault, 1972, p. 117).

A turn to a discursive analysis then shifts away from the self-evidence of ‘the’ event loaded with ‘relations of meaning’, but turns toward an understanding of ‘relations of power’ (Foucault, 1980, p. 114) which offers possibilities for understanding how identities are constructed through cultural and material practices, as a consequence of contextualized power/knowledge relationships. For Foucault (1980), power should be approached through a relational construct (p. 198) and as such can be understood as a freely circulating network, never localized or resting comfortably in the hands of any one person, but rather individuals are always “simultaneously undergoing and exercising” power (p. 98). In order to ascertain how power functions at its most basic level, Foucault suggests one must do so through an examination of its effects, which are realized at the level of discursive practices. Thus knowledge, ‘that of which one can speak in a discursive practice’ (Foucault, 1972, p. 182) is an effect of power, operating at the material and ideological level of local discursivities. Contextual, situated in local contexts, power can be both repressive and good as it “traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms of knowledge, produces discourse” (Foucault, 1980, p. 119). How does language function to produce forms of knowledge both in the lives of participants and in the institutional narrative of LSYOU?

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) highlight three important concepts about language as a tool to understand experience which is central to this project. First, they suggest that experience both governs and is informed by language. Specifically, they note the centrality of metaphors in to our conceptual systems. “The essence of metaphor,” they suggest, “is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 5). To show

how a concept can be metaphorical and govern everyday experience, they use the following example:

ARGUMENT IS WAR

Your claims are *indefensible*.
He *attacked every weak point* in my argument.
I *demolished* his argument.
I've never *won* an argument with him.
He *shot down* all of my arguments.

In the above example we come to see how conceptualizing argument as war, actually structures the actions that occur when arguing. However, the authors go on to suggest, if argument is conceptualized as a dance, conceptually understood as something balanced and visually pleasing, the concept of argument would take an entirely different tone, due to the different cultural experiences. They sum up the differences this way, “we have a discourse form structured in terms of battle and they have one structured in terms of dance” (p. 5). And they conclude, “we talk about arguments that way because we conceive of them that way – and we act according to the way we conceive of things” (p. 5).

Another metaphorical example by Lakoff & Johnson (1980) highlights two other important implications for understanding language as discourse. A discourse can also be understood as organizing principles. Thus, when looking at the metaphorical concept “TIME IS MONEY,” and its phrasings:

You're *wasting* my time.
This gadget will *save* you hours.
I don't *have* the time to *give* you.
How do you *spend* your time these days?
You need to *budget* your time.

It becomes clear how a Westernized industrial ethos has become conflated with a concept of our experiencing of time as something that “can be spent, wasted, budgeted, saved, or squandered”

(p. 8). Thus the governing metaphor TIME IS MONEY, is subcategorized by concepts that characterize entailment relationships, i.e. if time is money, and money is a limited resource, then time comes to be discussed as something that can be commoditized.

Lastly, Lakoff & Johnson (1980) suggest that metaphors' systematicity, that is the governing concepts of metaphors, necessarily show the possibilities and delimitations of metaphorical concept usage. The two previous examples, conceptualizing argument as war, and time as money are only "partial understandings" of what argument and time are. Arguments are not literally wars, and time is not literally money. However, when one understands the governing metaphors constructing these concepts, one understands how they are "partially structured and that [they] can be extended in some ways but not others" (p. 13). It is precisely the freedom existing in the partiality of language, which opens up discursive possibilities for understanding experience.

Metaphors are suggested as a way of reflexivity on practice (Duffy, 2005, p. 247), explaining social contexts (Jensen, 2006) as a way to understand how participants conceptualize their experience (Deacon, 2000) through allowing us "to imaginatively project ourselves into other people's minds and worlds" (Gibbs, 2006, p. 455). Therefore, an attention to metaphors I feel, can aid in Hendry's (2007) quest to relieve narrative research of its "impossible burden" (p. 489) of explaining lives, by alleviating some of the researcher's responsibility in retelling stories. In reconceptualizing narrative research as relational endeavors, we see that metaphors originate out of the everyday experiences of people and may be the best tools we have available to us as researchers (Rizzuto, 2009; Richardson, 1990) to tap into others' stories, lived and told. Metaphors tell stories. All we must do is simply listen (Jensen, 2006). I now turn to a discussion of at-risk discourse and its metaphorical implications. I present this section as a framework that

uncovers the potentiality of language to offer partial entry into other's lives. An understanding of language as historical, political, and social structures rooted in discourses of power/knowledge relationships can only provide the researcher an invitation into discourse.

“At Risk”: A Totalizing Narrative

Placier (1993) notes that the phrase “at risk” is the metaphorical legacy of the National Commission on Excellence in Education's *A Nation at Risk* (1983), a term used to describe students with a high potentiality of failing due to economic and cultural background characteristics. She further traces the etymology of “at risk” as “a term borrowed from the field of epidemiology, where it is associated with identification of populations with a higher probability of medical conditions and prevention of those conditions through targeted interventions” (Placier, 1993, p. 385). The implication of the term's transference as a descriptor from the field of epidemiology to its transference to the field of education implies congruence in conceptual and practical application. In educational discourse then, one's working class, minoritized background characteristics increases the level of associated risk of student drop out, thus positioning the student as target for conscription into this deficit discourse. An epidemiological approach is one of the earliest discursive framings of the way “at risk” is constituted as a discourse practice.

Edmonds (1986) further critiques the deficit view that characterizes “at risk” as an individual problem and not a social problem. Tracing the deficit-framing narrative of educational thinking that suggests “poor children do poorly in school because there is something intrinsically disabling about being poor” (p. 94) and not because the structure of the school favors middle-class knowledge transmission. Edmonds (1986) also critiquing the Coleman Report and The

Mosteller/Moynihan⁷ reports for substantiating the “familial effects” interpretation model to justify majority student attainment. The familial effects viewpoint suggests that students learn the way schools teach, perpetuating the logic that absolved the school structure from complicity in student failure of minoritized and poor populations whose educational attainment lagged behind their peers.

Edmonds (1986) favors an alternative interpretation that argues:

The key to improved achievement among school-age children depends on our ability *to compel schools – or persuade them – to profit from what we now know about how to be consistently effective for the full range of the pupil population, and especially for low-income and minority students* [my italics] (Edmonds, 1986, p. 95).

Edmonds’ work calls into question the framing of “at risk” as an individual problem and instead, challenges the structural constraints with which students find themselves at odds. He concludes that achievement is “relatively independent” of family background, when achievement is defined as “pupil acquisition of basic school skills,” (Edmonds, 1986, p. 95) highlighting the power of language to control the limits of discourse.

Gaston (1988) recognizing both the role that background characteristics *and* school environments (Wehlage & Rutter, 1986) play in the educational success of students circumscribed into “at risk” discourse, hypothesized that incorporating a participative school structure model (Likert, 1961) would increase kids' sense of belongingness, increase their grades, and self-esteem. This alternative school model contests the epidemiological underpinnings of “at risk” discourse, by not framing the discussion as a population problem to be targeted, but rather one in which the ethical imperative of the school as apparatus of the state seeks to recognize the

⁷ bell hooks (1989) also critiques the Moynihan report for its negative portrayal of the black family, specifically what she cites as an attack on black female subjectivity. Moynihan she asserts, “argued that the black American family was being undermined by female dominance” (p. 179). She says, “Moynihan placed a measure of the responsibility for the black male’s inability to assume a patriarchal role on black women, whereas black women felt

numerous extant discourses circulating in classrooms across America and be responsive to pluralism.

The term “at risk” is typically used to define students who have the propensity of dropping out of high school before graduation, and/or students who fail to meet basic proficiency standards in mathematics or reading by the eighth grade (NCES, 1992). Demographic information shows that Blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans are more likely to be deficient in reading and math skills and are more likely to drop out between 8th and 10th grades (NCES, 1992). Similarly, when race and socioeconomic status are controlled for, the rates at which minorities drop out are not statistically different from their White counterparts. Thus, race and SES are two important factors to consider as reference points in inquiries of youth with at-risk status.

Other predictors for dropping out are largely behavioral or socio-environmental. Behavioral dropout predictors include: a) Students who repeat grades, students with histories of poor math and English grades, students who do little homework; Students who are often unprepared for class, students who often cut class, or are tardy for school; Students considered by teachers to be passive, disruptive, inattentive, or thought to be underachievers; and first generation status students (NCES, 1992; Bergerson, 2010; Bell, Rowan-Kenyon, & Perna, 2009; Rowan-Kenyon, Bell, & Perna, 2008). Social and environmental dropout predictors include: a) Students who come from single-parent families, are over age from their peer group, students who frequently change schools; b) Students whose parents are not actively involved in their school, students whose parents never talk to them about school-related matters, students whose parents hold low expectations about their child’s educational attainment; c) Students from urban schools

that racism and black male indifference were the forces that caused black men to reject the role of sole economic provider” (p. 180).

with large minority populations (NCES, 1992; Bell, Rowan-Kenyon, & Perna, 2009; Rowan-Kenyon, Bell, & Perna, 2008). As evidenced by the literature, at-risk is conscription into behavioral, environmental, and social discourses. A poststructural lens, turns the literature on its head and asks, how can youth labeled at-risk become knowable subjects? It might also ask, how can educational spaces offer spaces away from deficit discourses towards a discourse of possibility?

Students labeled at-risk must employ coping mechanisms to navigate the journey from home to school. To address the cultural incongruence between students and the institutions which educate them, schools will either have to change their culture, or students will have to forsake theirs. Or, educational institutions will have to wear different hats, that is, they must find a way to be all things to all people. Education must address the social, cultural, and psychological effects of systemic poverty.

Coming to the Research Narratively

Narratives are stories people tell of their experiences. After researchers have collected the stories (known also as *data*), they employ thematic, structural, dialogic, or visual narrative analyses to interpret them (Riessman, 2008). When researchers collect participants' narratives, analyze, and restory them, this is known as narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). However, the restructuring of experience into stories with coherent, linear plotlines has been criticized as being "an atomistic view of experience" (Hendry, 2007, p. 491). Narrative research situates participants in historic, temporal, and contextual milieu, while implicating the researcher's presence not only in the retelling of the story, but also in the dialogical nature of the interview process (Scheurich, 1997). Polkinghorne (2010) suggests a strength of narrative inquiry is in its ability to inform practice through practical knowledge:

Narrative inquiries produce a storied description of a practice process carried out in a concrete life space. Unlike theoretically driven research, they do not produce a list of techniques or procedures that are promised to work in every setting. They offer their readers a vicarious experience of how a practice was conducted in a concrete situation. From this the readers' experiential background is enlarged, their repertoire of possible actions is increased, and the judgments about what might be done in their own practice in similar situations is sharpened (p. 396).

The strength of narrative research however, rests upon the ability of the author's stylistic tools of conveyance, heeding the importance of the relationship between style (Coulter & Smith, 2009) and representations as ontological commitments (Clandinin & Murphy, 2009). Narratives are aesthetic (Eisner, 1991) and 'storytelling is a key element in which metaphors and folk knowledge take their place' (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 16). It is believed that metaphors guide our conceptual systems (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) however, attention to metaphors in narrative inquiry function as little more than devices to explicate narrative findings or simply exist to aid in thinking narratively (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Riessman (2008b) questions, "To what degree does an investigation attend to narrative features?" (p. 152). This project responds to that question.

To come to this research narratively, I used Clandinin & Connelly's (2000) *three-dimensional narrative inquiry space* (p. 49) framework. Drawing upon Dewey's concept of experience, Clandinin & Connelly (2000) operationalize three Deweyian concepts central to narrative inquiry: interaction, continuity, and situation. They explain:

...Our terms are *personal* and *social* (interaction); *past*, *present*, and *future* (continuity); combined with the notion of *place* (situation). This set of terms creates a metaphorical *three-dimensional narrative inquiry space*, with temporality along one dimension, the personal and the social along a second dimension, and place along a third. Using this set of terms, any particular inquiry is defined by this three-dimensional space: studies have temporal dimensions and address temporal matters; they focus on the personal and the social in a balance appropriate to the inquiry; and they occur in specific places or sequences of places (p. 50).

This project acknowledges and understands Deweyian concepts of experience but also suggests, however, that experiential notions of interaction, continuity, and situation are highly contested, multiple, complex, and contradictory (Hendry, 2011; Mitchell, 2010; West, 1989; Hill Collins, 1990; Erevelles, 1996, 2005; Bateson, 1989).

Project Overview

In chapter two, through a framing of public and private that quietly serves as a background matrix through which to think through “experience,” I consider experience through various discourse traditions to understand the possibilities that exist within each discourse of experience as discursive formation. Through each exploration of experiential discourse, I look for “truths” that might reflect both, my own researcher positionalities, that of an African American female from a working class background, whose middle class sensibilities are informed by my doctoral candidacy, and also that of my participants’ multiple subjectivities, as African American students inhabiting urban, working class backgrounds, while simultaneous having their middle class sensibilities fostered through participation in a college access program.

Using each experiential discourse tradition as successive layers richly overlaying one map, I begin with an aerial view of experience and pause when I can begin to see more clearly, an image of the map through which the topography of experience begins to look vaguely familiar. I start with Dewey’s pragmatic philosophy of experience as democratic participation. I then enrich that layer by providing a discursive critique of Dewey, through a reading of Foucault and poststructuralism that suggests experience is a product of discourse. Foucault’s critique sheds light on the primacy of the historical moment to define the limits of experience. While his critique identifies the structural mechanisms of experience production, it fails to (re)locate

experience. To address this decentering I turn to critical pragmatism - a layer encompassing identity politics. Through critical pragmatism, experience is not spoken. It speaks.

Chapter three details the method and design of the study and considers notions of ethics in narrative research. Chapter four presents my first layer of analysis – I discuss the social and culture context of youth at the intersection of place, by engaging narratives about their home experiences. I also, consider how they engage place, within the context of the summer program. Then, I consider how they engage institutional gatekeepers. I conclude chapter four with a summary of implications that segues into chapter five. Chapter five presents the second layer of analysis. First, I present a partial historical narrative of “at risk” discourse, identifying three dominant historical themes. That analysis provides a map that allows consideration of emergent themes in LSYOU discourse as embedded in socio-cultural context. Taken together, I finally consider the implications of the LSYOU Family. In chapter six, I conclude with implications for educational stakeholders.

Strengths and Limitations of Project

This project can contribute to personal and professional practical knowledge of administrators, both in the field of education, the social sciences at large, and for organizational practice as well, as well as teachers, students, and community members who desire to understand the ethics of experience-responsive pedagogies. Further, this project may help to fill three gaps in the literature. On the one hand this study critiques the self-evidence of “at risk,” thus this project contributes to the existentialist literature by providing narratives of hope that enable us to better understand the human universality of conditions. Secondly, a gap exists in curriculum theory literature concerning theories of language as discourse practices, yet uninformed by empirical research that ties theory to practice. This project addresses that gap through a careful

examination of the role discourses of language play in informing the construction of social relationships, by locating through narratives specific discourse practices that inform identity negotiation in place. Thirdly, thusly informed by empirical data which illustrates the utility of understanding how language as discourse practice serve as organizing principals for social practices, this project can inform both theory and practice.

Potential limitations include: Generalizability. This study examines a program with a specific theoretical underpinning, targeting a very narrow population. Conclusions drawn from the data can equip researchers with the ideological tools necessary for reconceptualizing practice; though the particular strategies employed by LSYOU may not be “one size fits all,” it may provide a useful starting point for engendering discussion of pedagogical innovation through an understanding of language as discourse and as practice.

CHAPTER 2: A SHADE OF BLUE

The Fiction of the Public Sphere: The role of discourse in creating experience

What is the public sphere and who has access? Who can speak? What can be said? The public sphere is not merely a topographical coordinate outside the home, but rather, it has been argued that the public sphere is a contested space, at different times and in different places, that has functioned towards certain political ends. Giroux (2001) states that the notion of the public sphere dates back to seventeenth century capitalism in which the bourgeoisie constructed “ideological and material spaces... to interpret, reason, and mediate...questions of culture and everyday life, and questions of politics and the state” (p. 236). The conclusion he infers from this, is that this is an example of the ordering of experience. While actual public spaces were sanctioned for certain types of discourses, Giroux suggests that the public sphere was the mediating space between personal and state issues. That certain people could enter into discourse about political issues makes this space – the notion of the public – central to analyses. Elsewhere the public sphere has been expressed as ideological currencies situated in a series of relationships of power and domination, the effects of which are normalized through ideological apparatuses and ultimately function as discourses of common sense (Gramsci, 1971). Voice, agency, and place then come to be central to democratic projects. As an ideal and as a referent then, notions of the public sphere both convey necessary conditions for active citizenship and also calls into question the gap between promise and reality (Giroux, 2001). A critical approach turns the knob and opens the door to new possibilities.

It becomes necessary to engage the complex and contradictory ways in which the ideal of democracy is both conceptualized and enacted, especially by those whose circumscription into

certain discourses precludes the possibility of access and voice. Specifically, this study addresses the lives of students deemed at-risk for failure, due to “status risk characteristics.” Status risk characteristics are defined as socio-economic status and school-type status, predictors which increase the likelihood of school failure (Finn, 2006). Because school is the legitimized conduit to social attainment, and social attainment increases the likelihood of access into dominant spaces, the increased likelihood of school failure due to certain status risk factors, decreases the likelihood of participation in legitimized material and ideological spaces, constitutively known as the public sphere (Apple, 2004; Anderson, 1988).

What can be said? Giroux (2001) critiques positivism, due to its lack of allowance for subjectivity and critical thinking. He states:

By functioning within an operational context free from ethical commitments, positivism wedded itself to the immediate and “celebrated” the world of “facts.” The question of essence – the difference between the world as it is and as it could be – is reduced to the merely methodological task of collecting and classifying facts. Questions concerning the genesis, development, and normative nature of the conceptual systems that select, organize, and define the facts appear to be outside the concern of positivist rationality (Giroux, 2001, p. 15).

Succinctly said, rationalism ignores the socio-cultural categories in which larger questions of experience are embedded. The “objective” perspective constituted by a value-neutral approach not only defines *what* can be said, but also delimits *how* it can be said. A positivist approach has dominated Western ideological thought and subsequently shaped the rules of discourse. These demarcations have implications for setting the parameters of the acceptability of discourse in public spaces.

Who can speak? Maynes, Pierce, and Laslett (2008) explain how bounded notions of rationality precluded the entrance of some into the public sphere: “The connection between literacy and defining the self marginalized not only most women but also lower-class men,

people from oral cultures, and other subaltern voices” (p. 20). Thus the public sphere has functioned as a reification of socially constructed, value-specific categories of acceptability, which have functioned to determine stilted conceptions of who can speak, and of determining the acceptable discourses in which the spoken could be uttered. Janet Miller (1990) suggests, “the fissures of... public and private, are artificial distinctions that separate us from ourselves and from the relationships in which knowledges about self and about our worlds are generated” (p. 173). When Miller invokes the idea of “communities without consensus,” she is engaging the contradiction of democracy as an ideal and democracy as practice. The lens of critical theory engages a reconceptualization about the relationship between public versus private, redefining notions of agency, voice, and place.

Greene (2000) suggests,

The challenge is to make the ground palpable and visible to our students, to make possible the interplay of multiple voices, of “not quite commensurable visions.” It is to attend to the plurality of consciousnesses – and their recalcitrances and their resistances, along with their affirmations (p. 198).

This project in the spirit of an ideal democracy, takes a plurivocal approach towards reconceptualizing notions of place as centers ‘to interpret, reason, and mediate...questions of culture and everyday life,’ of reconceptualizing voices not stilted by paradigms of dominant discourses, and of reconceptualizing agency and participation in contextual practices. In order to realize the possibilities of ‘communities without consensus’ this study of participants in the discourse of a college access program engages multiple discourses.

As I reconceptualize the contours of the public sphere I reflect upon Jardine, Friesen, & Clifford’s (2006) notion of a “curriculum in abundance.” The implications are that traditional paradigms of knowledge position certain places and people as knowers, creating a regime of scarcity, and it is only in looking (or being able to *see*) to the abundance of experience in all

places, that discursive voices interrupt public monologues that exist on experience. I take this understanding and extend reconceptualizations of experience to an examination of the “underside of American life” (Glaude, 2007, p. 5), and by this I mean, knowledge outside of dominant discourses – specifically the knowledge that can be gleaned from an alternative support program for youth, under the auspices of a dropout prevention program. A curriculum in abundance is only made clear when knowledge unexpectedly emerges from an alternative space. Thus, a curriculum of abundance allows for a reimagining of “how knowledge itself is imagined” (p. 9). If knowledge has one face, we must blur its phenotypical traits. If knowledge has one location, we must seek alternatives. We must disrupt tradition. Therefore, traditional conceptions of the *school* and of *schooling* must be rethought. Likewise, notions of curriculum must be disturbed. In this section, I look at *experience* as phenomena, and show how theoretical conceptualizations attend to conceptions of voice, access, and agency, all crucial to what Glaude (2007) explains as necessarily embodying “all the possibilities and limitations that have defined our fragile experiment in democracy” (p. 2) Elsewhere I have argued that it is only through an understanding of experience that we can begin to dismantle dominant narratives and reframe our thinking in ways that improve our praxis (Exkano, 2012). I begin narrowly with American Pragmatist Dewey and his philosophy of experience. Then, I engage experience through macro-level poststructuralist theoretical lenses of Foucault, Bourdieu, and to a lesser extent, the economic lens of Bowles & Gintis. From there, equipped with the tools to understand what constitutes dominant narratives of experience, and how experience is mediated through discursive social practices such as its institutionalization and production, I narrow my exploration of experience through a critical pragmatic tradition exploring the works of DuBois, West, Mitchell, & Hill Collins.

Dewey and Experience

Culture is viewed by some as a site of struggle. For Dewey, education served as a site of contestation. “An intelligent theory,” he argues, “engages the causes for the conflicts that exist and then, instead of taking side[s], indicate[s] a plan of operations proceeding from a level deeper and more inclusive than is represented by the practices and ideas of contending parties” (Dewey, 1938, p. 6). Resisting both an easy “compromise between” and an “eclectic combination of” traditional and progressive ideas of education, Dewey’s philosophy of experience offers possibilities for creating a new frame of reference, offering “conceptions leading to new modes of practice” (Dewey, 1938, pp. 6-7).

I begin a search for understanding the ontological contours of experience with American pragmatic philosopher John Dewey’s *Experience and Education* (1938). Experience, as it existed prior to Dewey’s articulation, was nestled in the discourses of traditional education. Traditional, or classical, education with its bureaucratic slant and rigid curriculum of “routinization, memorization, and recitation ... [existed] for mental discipline,” and not for the interests of the child (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2008, p. 105). It would be impossible then within those existing discourses, to begin to seek out something of the contours of experience, with them already being so well-defined. Experience, arrested in development, could not even achieve its own potential within the confines of traditional thinking. Dewey, in reconfiguring the relationship between the child, their education, and society, removes experience from its philosophical captivity, and in so doing, allows it to float freely, unprotected, and observable.

Dewey provides a useful framework to begin to understand Western notions of lived experience. Though he did not create experience, he did make clear its possibilities. An understanding of continuity, interaction, and chronology can best be understood as naturally

occurring processes in the cycle of life. Of life he says, “‘Life’ covers customs, institutions, beliefs, victories and defeats, recreations and occupations. We employ the word “experience” in the same pregnant sense” (Dewey, 1916, p. 4). If education is experience and experience is life, then we do well to glean from the knowledge of life more on the nature of experience. So, how does Dewey outline a theory of experience?

In an earlier articulation found in *Democracy and Education* (1916), experience is realized through the child’s intentional interaction with their environment. Dewey says:

The nature of experience can be understood only by noting that it includes an active and a passive element peculiarly combined. On the active hand, experience is trying – a meaning which is made explicit in the connected term experiment. On the passive, it is undergoing. When we experience something we act upon it, we do something with it; then we suffer or undergo the consequences. We do something to the thing and then it does something to us in return; such is the peculiar combination...To ‘learn from experience’ is to make a backward and forward connection between what we do to things and what we enjoy or suffer from things in consequence. Under such conditions, doing becomes a trying; an experiment with the world to find out what it is like; the undergoing becomes instruction-discovery of the connection of things (Dewey, 1916, pp. 113-114).

For Dewey, a philosophy of education was situated in the progressive idea of participation, in a way that had previously been disallowed by traditional education. In a participatory first-hand sense, experience is that ‘experiment with the world,’ in which the child is the initiator. For Dewey, experience encompasses continuity and interaction between the child and their environment. Experience in this sense is an action verb denoting backward and forward (past and present continuity) synthesis between ‘what we do to things and what we enjoy or suffer from things in consequence’ (Dewey, 1916, p.113-114). However, this one-dimensional definition does not allow for a conceptualization of experience as a normative discourse. What is lacking from this early articulation of experience is a consideration of the macro-level understandings of experiential discourses in which the child is situated, it does not consider for instance actions, or participation in events where children are the objects of action, and the subsequent long term

implications of those actions. Through this alternative lens, 'to learn from experience' not only necessitates making a historical connection "between what we do to things and what we enjoy or suffer from things" but also making a connection between what an(Other) does to us, and the subsequent implications of suffering/enjoyment of those experiences.

Experience, in a Deweyian sense, is best understood through two fundamental concepts: interaction and continuity. The principle of the continuity of experience explains that "every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after" (Dewey, 1938, p. 27). In order to discriminate between experiences, Dewey suggests, physical, moral, and intellectual growth must occur, thus suggesting a *value designation* upon experience. He says, "the measure of the value of an experience lies in the perception of relationships or continuities to which it leads up" (Dewey, 1916, p. 114), which leads to his distinguishing between the types of experience. Growth is determined by educative or mis-educative experiences, admittedly a very modernist position. He says,

The belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that experiences are genuinely or equally educative. Experience and education cannot be directly related to each other. For some experiences are mis-educative. Any experience is mis-educative that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience (Dewey, 1938, pp. 20-21).

While Dewey recognizes that "there is some kind of continuity" in every experience, he believes we must determine the "direction in which growth takes place" (Dewey, 1938, p. 38). Growth in this sense is understood as education. Positive growth would be caused by experiences that "arouses curiosity, strengthens initiative, and sets up desires and purposes...in the future" (Dewey, 1938, p. 29). However, it could be argued that (mis)educative experiences as phenomena are highly subjective and can be thus interpreted in a plurality of ways. It can be

argued that miseducative experiences can also arouse curiosity, strengthen initiative, and set up desires for future development. Because Dewey understands experience as democratic participation, one gets the feeling that educative experiences are those that allow for greater levels of democratic participation, though that is debatable also.

While an understanding of continuity explains the historical nature of experience upon self-development, Dewey's second principle for interpreting an experience is *interaction*. Interaction is the relationship between a person and their environment, a person in this case defined as a person and their "personal needs, desires, purposes, and capacities;" the environment is understood as "objective conditions," that is, what is spoken, how it is spoken, classroom apparatus, etc. which contribute to the learning experience (Dewey, 1938, pp. 34-35). Failure to adapt to the discursive place of a classroom can lead to a student's miseducative experience. However, Dewey charges teachers to embody an understanding of educative and mis-educative experiences, that is, experiences which either promote or stunt growth, that allow for future educative experiences. Dewey envisioned the classroom as a democratic site and as such The Dewey School "became a home in which the curriculum was ...devised to develop social and community life" (Pinar et al., 1998, p. 107). However *whose* social and community lives were being developed is situated in macro-level understandings of power and discourse. Further, teachers were charged with facilitating democratic ideals, yet strangely absent from this critique are understandings of the way power functioned at the societal, institutional, and personal levels. Thus, classroom analyses of experience as bounded phenomena fail to account for experience in all of its forms. Continuity and interaction then, are intercepting factors, described by Dewey as "longitudinal and lateral aspects of experience."

Important also to the interplay between continuity and interaction is Dewey's modernist understanding of chronology as central to experience. While continuity accounts for the past educative events that account for present day experiences, and interaction accounts for the physical and discursive contributions to the learning environment, Dewey argues that every experience should prepare for the *future*. He says, "In a certain sense every experience should do something to prepare a person for later experiences of a deeper and more expansive quality. That is the very meaning of growth, continuity, reconstruction of experience" (Dewey, 1938, p. 36). Dewey's understanding of time as dynamic, critiques traditional education's static notion of time, due to its inability to anticipate how everyday education might both satisfy present and anticipate future needs. Thus, unlike the shortcoming of the technical rationalist period in education, chronology is the glue that unites the past, present, and future understandings of experience.

Dewey hints at the importance of understanding the historical role that continuity and interaction play as individuals move from private to public. He says,

As an individual passes from one situation to another, his world, his environment, expands or contracts. He does not find himself living in another world but in a different part or aspect of one and the same world. What he has learned in the way of knowledge and skill in one situation becomes an instrument of understanding and dealing effectively with the situations that follow (Dewey, 1938, p. 34).

Elsewhere he says, "It may fairly be said, therefore, that any social arrangement that remains vitally social, or vitally shared, is educative to those who participate in it" (Dewey, 1916, p. 7). For Dewey, experience was democratic, and schools were "an embryonic community" reflectant of social life (Dewey, 1902/2009, p. 33).

Dewey's philosophy of experience is not without critique. Laird (1988) deconstructs Deweyan notions of experience and his attending to gender. Considering a *Ladies' Home Journal* article in which Dewey attends to the topic of coeducation, Laird searches for Dewey's "privately claimed feminism" (p. 112) against a reading of practices at the Laboratory School. Laird critiques Dewey's notion of continuity in the journal article as subverting his theory of democratic education as effectuated at the Laboratory School. She asserts that in his theoretical journal article, gender roles persist in their continuity, specifically the "looking/doing duality" (p. 125) which extends from the lives of mothers and fathers to daughters and sons, through images of "mothers who *train* children while men, as fathers, take on the implicitly greater responsibility for children's *intellectual and moral nurture*" (p. 123). Laird's critique of Dewey's seemingly pragmatic gender-neutral education with its "curriculum aimed at women's subordinate domesticity" (p. 128) dismisses the work undertaken by women such as Alice Dewey and Jane Addams at the Laboratory School. This article highlights the multiple, complex, contradictory ways in which experience exists as theory and practice. Having taken into consideration the article's intentionality against the historicity of actual social conditions reveals that "Dewey's self was indeed "capable of including within itself a number of inconsistent selves, of unharmonized dispositions" (p. 128). Dewey's "wishful" move toward gender equality was situated in the larger contradiction of a dominant societal male narrative dependent upon female domesticity.

The limitations of Dewey's experientialist vision are addressed by the post-experiential wave in education. The post-experiential wave in education addresses the implicit neutrality of experience and the incorporation of issues of power. Hendry (2010) further "unsettles curriculum," specifically in her critique of Dewey's universalist notions of experience, for failing

to acknowledge education's role as regulator of knowledge and substantiator of dominant social norms. Through a genealogy of the work of Jane Addams, Hendry suggests:

Addam's vision of "social democracy" challenged dominant discourses of Enlightenment thought by exposing the deeply gendered and racial categories of political theory that conceptualized rights as universal, individual, natural, and inalienable. Addams was engaged in revising conceptions of politics and power by viewing them through the lens of gender, ethnicity, class and race. She articulated the ways in which the political sphere was demarcated as public/private, how concepts such as citizenship appeared to be gender neutral, and how liberal political discourse excluded the experiences of immigrants and women... p. 141

Additionally, bell hooks (1981) unfolds the story of Anna Julia Cooper, African American educator, feminist, and activist. She credits Cooper for urging "black women to articulate their own experiences and to make the public aware of the way in which racism *and* sexism together affected their social status" [my italics](p. 166). Cooper writes: "The colored woman...is confronted by a woman question and a race problem, and is as yet an unknown or unacknowledged factor in both." However, experience (and subsequently) identity was highly contested and contradictory, as hooks points out, Cooper's activist aims for African American women's right to education were made within the socio-cultural discourses available – which meant her appeals for feminine and ethnic equality were encompassed in a patriarchal paradigm.

While Dewey conceptualizes experience as a social enterprise with democratic aims, his notion of experience does not account for the production of materiality of experience, that is, an understanding of how experience is socially contoured, or the social construction of subjectivity. For this I turn to Foucault. Where Dewey charges teachers to facilitate the "reconstruction of experience," he does not situate the teacher's experience within the larger socio-cultural ideological teaching machine. In other words while he rejects the notion that past knowledge is old knowledge, he does not critique macrolevel sociocultural influences which determine the limits of verifiable knowledge (experience). For this I will turn to social reproduction theory.

While he assumes that education should be moral, in an ethical sense, he neglects to critique the amoral nature in which democracy has functioned in the United States. For this I turn to pragmatic theorizations of experience.

Experience by Any Other Name would be... Power: Foucault

Foucault on Knowledge, Power, & Subjectivity and the Institutionalization of Experience

It would be wrong to say that the soul is an illusion, or an ideological effect. On the contrary, it exists, it has a reality, it is produced permanently around, on, within the body by the functioning of a power that is exercised on those punished – and, in a more general way, on those one supervises, trains and corrects, over madmen, children at home and at school, the colonized, over those who are stuck at a machine and supervised for the rest of their lives. This is the historical reality of this soul...(Foucault, 1977, p. 29)

The soul is the effect and instrument of a political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body (Foucault, 1977, p. 30).

French Philosopher Michel Foucault's study of the history of thought allows for a critique of the limits of verifiable knowledge and for exploring the relationship of knowledge and power on the formation of subjectivities. For Foucault, to understand the relationship between power and knowledge was to understand "a part of our experience" (Foucault 1982/2003, p. 127). A discussion of the deeply personal nature of subjectivity begins outside of the body. He questions, "In what way do individual or collective experiences arise from singular forms of thought – that is, from what constitutes the subject in its relations to the true, to rules, to itself (Foucault, 2003, p. 60)?" To begin to understand individual actions relative to 'the true, to rules,' however, is to question truth not in its essence, but rather the production of truth that has been constituted through a tangled web of hegemonic, social, economic, and cultural discourses. Thus, knowledge at any point in time is made possible by the rules available through extant discourses, the parameters which define acceptable experience. Weiler (1999) explains the relationship between knowledge, language, and subjectivity:

By knowledge I refer to the debate about universal versus particular truth claims and the nature of historical evidence, the question of what exactly are our sources of understanding the past; by language, the question of discourse and its relationship to experience as the source of our knowledge of the past; and by subjectivity, the question of essence and identity (p. 44).

Foucault shows in his historical analysis of institutions how knowledge and the subject have been constituted through specific practices.

In *Discipline and Punish* (1977) Foucault examines a history of the practices of the penal system. The lines between notions of public and private are blurred in his analysis of the constitution of the penal object. Tracing the history of the disappearance of the body in the 18th century as the major target of ‘penal repression⁸,’ (p. 8), Foucault argues that punishment becomes ‘the most hidden part’ of the penal process, due to the ‘disappearance of the spectacle and the elimination of pain [due to the torturous practices of public executions]’ (p. 11) associated with increased humanism and moral awareness of the judicial system⁹. The 19th century saw punishment as a loss of bodily rights, i.e.: rationing of food, sexual deprivation, solitary confinement (p. 16). 20th century modern penalty began to focus on the soul which is what Foucault deems ‘a trace of torture’ from previous centuries (p. 16). Due to increased humanism notions of crime as an object of the penal system, came to be understood not only through the physical act, i.e., murder, but also through discursive acts: *intentionality*, the intentions behind the act, i.e., the motive, the will, or the *soul*.

⁸ Chapter 1 opens with the gruesome public execution of one accused of regicide. “On a scaffold that will be erected there, the flesh will be torn from his breasts, arms, thighs and calves with red-hot pincers, his right hand, holding the knife with which he committed the said parricide, burnt with sulphur, and on those places where the flesh will be torn away, poured molten lead, boiling oil, burning resin, wax and sulphur melted together and then his body drawn and quartered by four horses and his limbs and body consumed by fire... p. 3

⁹ Foucault actually attributes this humanist ethos as a sense of judiciary shame. He explains that 18th century executioners were often negatively associated with the crimes of those sentenced due to an inversion of shame for the victim into pity or glory. After the trial, and the sentencing he writes, “the execution itself is like an additional shame that justice is ashamed to impose on the condemned man; so it keeps its distance from the act, tending always to entrust it to others, under the seal of secrecy. Those who carry out the penalty tend to become an autonomous sector; justice is relieved of responsibility (pp. 9-10).

With this shift in emphasis from the body as a site of practices to the mind/soul there is a value placed on judgments of crime. Judgments were no longer based on the substantiality of truth (that is proving that the act was committed), but shifted to “assessing, diagnostic, prognostic judgments” invoking a strange ‘scientifico-judicial complex’ (p. 19) into the judgment process. The incorporation of scientific ‘machinery’ (such as psychiatrists) into the sentencing process, Foucault suggests, “even if it is always formulated in terms of legal punishment, implies, more or less obscurely, judgments of normality, attributions of causality, assessments of possible changes, anticipations to the offender’s future” (p. 20). Thus, Foucault suggests, a judgment bears “an assessment of normality and a technical prescription for a possible normalization...the judge...does more than judge. And he is not alone in judging. Throughout the penal procedure and the implementation of the sentence there swarms a whole series of subsidiary authorities” (p. 21). Foucault says, “Today, criminal justice functions and justifies itself only by this perpetual reference to something other than itself...Its fate is to be redefined by knowledge” (p. 22). What are the contemporary methods then of disciplining “the modern soul and of a new power to judge (p. 23)?

Conceptions of governmentality, exceed the physical and continue its exercise in the ideological realm, with techniques of discipline that produce subjects and experience, Foucault argues. Just as public spectacles of torture acted as state apparatuses which functioned to legitimate the power of sovereignty, he argues that “hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment and their combination in a procedure that is specific to it, the examination” (p. 170), accounts for the transcendence of ideological structure becoming endemic to institutional structures, such as the school.

Thus institutionalized experience comes to be:

The correlation of a domain of knowledge [*savoir*], a type of normativity, and a mode of relation to the self; it means trying to decipher how in Western societies, a complex experience is constituted from and around certain forms of behavior: an experience that conjoins a field of knowledge [*connaissance*] (with its own concepts, theories, diverse disciplines), a collection of rules (which differentiate the permissible from the forbidden, natural from monstrous, normal from pathological, what is decent from what is not, and so on), and a mode of relation between the individual and himself (which enables him to recognize himself as a sexual subject amid others). Pg. 58

Experience in this sense is a multifaceted concept, grounded locally in practices of the body but unknowingly realized at the ideological level. Experiential knowledge then is an apparatus of the state, and the body, a mere site for its practices. Foucault is not without critique. West (1989) criticizes Foucault for his seemingly objectivist viewpoint, his “anonymous and autonomous discourses, disciplines, and techniques” (p. 225). Further, West (1989) argues that Foucault reifies discourses at the expense of “downplaying human agency” (p. 225). Because Foucault’s subjects always exist within constraints, its applicability is limited in exploring lived experience. Yet Foucault is useful for his critique of the function of power in the shaping of experience. Lastly, West (1989) criticizes Foucault’s apolitical stance as a devaluing of “moral discourse” (p. 226). It is necessary to turn to a theory that allows for an understanding of agency in experience, and reflections of democracy. However, Foucault’s analysis of governmentalized experience is useful for critiquing the institutionalization of experience because it builds upon my critique of Dewey’s lack of attending to social forces which inform institutional interactions, further, Foucault’s analysis is useful for discursive understandings of the role, power, knowledge, and subjectivity play in neo-experiential conceptions of experience in institutional settings. A look at social reproduction theory will show specifically how power functions to shape experience in educational contexts.

Social Reproduction Theory

Social reproduction theory explains the privileging and legitimization of certain forms of experience. Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's (1973/1977) social reproduction theory explains how educational institutions contribute to the reproduction and stratification of power relations in society, by reproducing the structure distribution of cultural and social capital. The theory maintains that schools, as ideologues of dominant culture, sustain the structure of class relationships, through their transmission of dominant class dispositions, such as linguistic and cultural dispositions. Ultimately, social reproduction theory posits, that familial upbringing determines relative ease of educational acculturation. Accordingly, students lacking the dispositions implicitly and explicitly put forth by the school, due to lack of hereditary familiarity with dominant culture, find themselves at odds with the educational system.

Through their analyses of social reproduction, Bourdieu (1973/1977), Bowles and Gintis (1972/1977, 2002) critique the myth of meritocracy, the idea that education is a guarantor of economic equality and higher earnings. Bowles and Gintis (1972/1977, 2002) show how intergenerational socioeconomic status persists, regardless of educational achievement. Additionally, Bourdieu (1973/1977) posits that economic capital, power, and social relationships (material and discursive capital) are stronger determinants of one's social mobility than educational attainment. Social reproduction theory is useful for its critique of institutions' covert ability to both reproduce and legitimize dominant middle class norms, while ignoring the role of power and institutionalized inequity in impairing social mobility.

Social reproduction theories are largely informed by economic theory, which explains social relationships through an economic analysis in which the key unit of analysis is capitalism. Bourdieu (1973/1977, 1986) diverges from and builds upon, static notions of monetary currency

as the sole means of *capital*, and introduces additional forms of capital, cultural and social, to account for material and discursive means of analyzing social relations. Owing to its relationship to economic theory, social capital is governed by the guiding principles of economic exchange: accumulation, reproduction, and conversion. In the way that goods are exchanged for services, cultural and social capital can also be exchanged, accumulated, reproduced, and converted into dominant middle class economic, social, and symbolic gain.

According to Bourdieu, cultural capital can exist in three forms: embodied (knowledge which contributes to dispositions similar to habits), objectified (cultural goods such as books, dictionaries, machines), and institutionalized (educational qualifications or credentials). The value of these forms of capital, similar to the process of scarcity of goods driving the value, derives its value from social scarcity, that is, from a stratified class society, and as such is contingent upon social demand. Important to this concept are *habitus* and *field*. Habitus are the dispositions one acquires socially through family, educational, or any socio-cultural experiences. A field is an existing set of power relations, whereby agents compete for control of interests and resources (Johnson in Bourdieu, 1993). In this field, Bourdieu argues, ‘particular laws’ exist which exert specific forms of capital, which ‘like a prism’ refract ‘the specific logic of the field’ (p. 164). Clearly stated, social codes exist whereby people who have been previously taught the knowledge to decode cultural cues are better able to participate in the decoding process, more readily than uninstructed people. Cultural capital in these forms can be material or discursive and convertible into economic capital.

Social capital is defined as:

the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of

its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital, a ‘credential’ which entitles them to credit. (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 249)

Thus, to have social capital is to have collective backing, more “connections,” and greater access to institutionalized resources. Social capital can be symbolic or material and convertible into economic capital.

Bourdieu (1986) suggests that the volume of social capital one can possess depends upon the size of the network of connections, and the volume of economic, cultural, or symbolic capital that one or one’s network possesses. Two characteristics frame a social capital framework then: the social relationship that allows for the claiming of resources, and the quantity and quality of those resources. Through group collectivism and homogeneity dominant, middle class values are produced and reproduced. Bourdieu’s cultural and social reproduction theories were developed as alternative explanations to unequal achievement rates in education. While he has been critiqued for being overly deterministic (Casey, 2001), social reproduction still has utility. Social reproduction theory then, shows how certain forms of experience are privileged and legitimized, through institutional practices. Referring back to Dewey’s reliance upon educators as agents whereby institutional knowledge is transmitted, it becomes necessary to reconceptualize the teacher student relationship, as a struggle for power (in a Foucauldian lens) in light of institutional discourses, in which teachers as institutional agents mediate the resources (cultural capital) between school and student.

Thus, a network-oriented approach is needed to understand the relationship between social capital attainment and youth. An explication of a social capital framework that encompasses a network oriented approach aimed towards understanding minority children’s access to resources is offered by Stanton-Salazar (1997, 2000, 2011). He operationalizes social capital as “the degree and quality of middle class forms of social support inherent in a young

person's interpersonal network" (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, p. 5). Drawing upon the tradition of Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) and Bowles and Gintis (1976), he argues that success in schooling is a matter of "learning how to *decode the system* (author's italics)" (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, p. 13), a system whose middle-class codes are unknown to working class youth. Additionally, due to linguistic and cultural barriers, working-class youths' cultural capital must be reconciled with institutionalized capital, or what Stanton-Salazar (2011) refers to as "White, middle-class, male-centric discourse, with its stress on *individualism*" (p. 1073). Institutional agents both explicitly and tacitly transmit support to students and can impair or empower youth (Delpit, 1995, 2006).

Experience on the Margins: West, Du Bois, & Hill Collins

What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all its children...Only by being true to the full growth of all the individuals who make it up, can society by any chance be true to itself (Dewey, 1902/2009, p. 29)

The child is taken out of his familiar physical environment, hardly more than a square mile or so in area, into the wide world – yes, and even to the bounds of the solar system. His little span of personal memory and tradition is overlaid with the long centuries of the history of all peoples. (Dewey, 1902/2009, p. 5)

As I have shown previous conceptualizations of experience failed to address issues of race, class, gender, and lived experiences, therefore, it becomes necessary to shift the customary ideological grid. Critical theorizing on experience has taken a resistance theme to dominant notions of experience, with revolutionary attempts beginning with the awakening of consciousness (Freire, 2009; Asante, 2007; Hill Collins, 1990; Giroux, 2001). Critical pedagogue Freire's (2009) term *conscientização* encompasses an idea of a critical consciousness, that is a level of perception whereby people can perceive social, political, and economic contradictions. However, Freire posits that awakening critical consciousness is inherently dialogical and begins with an investigation of what he terms the people's "'thematic universe' –

the complex of their generative themes (p. 96). A consideration of people's generative themes is a project that has been undertaken by several in the field.

While it is not my aim to pathologize Blackness, in this section I investigate the Black pragmatic tradition as a generative theme for a discussion of poverty and race to understand how the two intersect socially. The Black Pragmatic tradition is useful for understanding experience because it attends to the way in which race and socioeconomics intersect with access, voice, and agency. I choose to theorize from this position of otherness, that is, from a position that is outside dominant discourse, in the same way the dropout prevention program (and its participants) is other in academic discourse and is not typically the place from which educational theorization occurs. Cornel West (1989) suggests that American pragmatism can be a "continuous cultural commentary or set of interpretations that attempt to explain America to itself at a particular historical moment" (p. 5). When theorizing about experience and locating a moment where America attempted to explain America to itself, Sociologist W.E.B. du Bois' (1903) emerges as a central figure. For Du Bois (1903) the experience of being a part of the racial minority was akin to "being a problem...a strange experience" (p. 1). He writes:

The Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, – a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness, – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (Du Bois, 1903, p. 2).

Du Bois' oft-cited "double consciousness" is centrally posited as the axiological binary of self and other – not the self who lives as a subject, but the self as an object, negotiating the public expertly "through the revelation of the other world" (p. 2). Thus, he identifies two realms of identity negotiation, his identity as an American (and by extension, mainstream society), and as a

minoritized being who negotiates his existence through cognizance of his objectification (a type of reactionary social posturing). The latter perspective, in which one's identity is never absent of paternalistic oversight, denies agency (Hilliard, 1995).

Du Bois as starting point for theorization on socioeconomic and minoritization, underscores and encapsulates an ontology for what West (1989) refers to as “the wretched of the earth” (p. 138). It is possible that West's reference to “the wretched of the earth” serves to invoke Frantz Fanon's (1963) eponymous title in which he suggests revolutionary political mobilization begin with the lowest members of society (vagrants, criminals, the unemployed). Indeed, West argues that Du Bois “remained intimately linked with oppositional forces” (p. 234). Informed by Dewey, Du Bois and Emerson, West's *prophetic pragmatism* is a “form of cultural criticism and locates politics in the everyday experiences of ordinary people” yet, in departure from Dewey, within a social analytic lens (p. 214). However, while prophetic pragmatism exists in Marxian intersections of class analyses, it critiques Foucauldian politics. Prophetic Pragmatist philosophies reject Foucault's objective discourses. Human agency, West additionally argues, is central to a prophetic pragmatist philosophy. Further, while “prophetic pragmatists criticize and resist forms of subjection...these critiques and resistances, unlike [Foucault's] are unashamedly guided by moral ideals of creative democracy and individuality” (p. 226).

Glaude (2007) refers to American pragmatism's blind spot to the tragic as a *shade of blue*. Glaude argues that America must address “the tragedy of race in America” (p. 18). While West he claims, suggests Dewey fails to grapple with the American evil, Glaude suggests otherwise in his reading of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (a task I have taken up in the next paragraph through feminist postructuralist lens) through a lens of *moral* experience. In the paragraph below I argue that Sethe's (heroine? protagonist?) desire to murder her children away from a legacy of

enslavement is a form of self-constructed praxis, rooted in the knowledge that emerges from the contextual, social, and historical positioning of her multiple identities as Black, enslaved female. However, this scene can also be understood as a moral issue – an issue of morality situated within a larger immoral system. It is only in a shade of blue – that is a Black pragmatic tradition that Sethe’s motivations can be understood, reconciled, and contextualized as normal, given her moral compass that emerges within an amoral system. To understand the culture of the wretched of the earth, West explains, “requires not only an acknowledgement of what they are up against but also an appreciation of how they cope with their situation” (p. 233). Experience then becomes a starting point for generating knowledge.

Patricia Hill Collins (1990) in *Black Feminist Thought*, notes the “connection between experience and consciousness that shapes the everyday lives of African-American women” (p. 25). Hill Collins foregrounds Black women’s subjectivities as the center of analyses for the ‘taken-for-granted knowledge’ (p. 235) that emerges from groups whose voices have been muted due to onto-epistemological domination. One of the core concepts of Black feminist thought is the power of self-definition, which Hill Collins posits is “essential to Black women’s survival” (p. 95). She says, “For Black women, constructed knowledge of self emerges from the struggle to reject controlling images and integrate knowledge deemed personally important, usually knowledge essential to Black women’s survival” (p. 95). A poignant example of the role self-constructed knowledge plays in the rejection of dominant ideologies is Toni Morrison’s (2004) *Beloved*. The main character Sethe engages in inner dialogue about her incarnate daughter Beloved, whom she killed to resist the child’s being born into slavery:

Beloved, she my daughter. She mine. See. She come back to me of her own free will and I don’t have to explain a thing. I didn’t have time to explain before because it had to be done quick. Quick. She had to be safe and I put her where she would be...I’ll explain to her, even though I don’t have to. Why I did it. How if I hadn’t killed her she would have

died and that is something I could not bear to happen to her. I have felt what it felt like and nobody walking or stretched out is going to make you feel it too. Not you, not none of mine, and when I tell you you mine, I also mean I'm yours (pp. 236-239).

Sethe subverts normalized notions of motherhood encompassed by ideas of care and protection.

For a slave in the antebellum south, Sethe draws upon her unique experiences of enslavement as the knowledge that situates her actions, evidenced by her inner monologue: "I have felt what it felt like." In order to understand Sethe's actions, the Western dominant Anglo-inspired narrative of normalizing discourses, must be disrupted and emancipated from their totalizing grasp.

Through the emergent knowledge of Black enslaved female subjectivity Sethe's decision to murder her daughter, lest she be sold into the greater evil of that peculiar institution, come to be understood as a discourse of nurturing, care, and protection, one that does not end even in death; "when I tell you you mine, I also mean I'm yours." The act of slaves killing themselves and their children to avoid the horrors of slavery was not uncommon. Sethe's commitment to Beloved is underscored by the knowledge that "quick" murder and then death, would have been better than a life of enslavement that would have led to a type of deathly living where, if she hadn't been killed "she would have died" anyway. Sethe's act can be understood as one of economic, social, and cultural resistance to the White supremacist, patriarchal system of enslavement.

Explaining that Black women's position on society's margins affords them a unique angle of vision, Hill Collins says:

Taken together, the outsider-within perspective generated by Black women's location in the labor market and this grounding in traditional African-American culture provide the material backdrop for a unique Black women's standpoint on self and society. As outsiders within, Black women have a distinct view of the contradictions between the dominant group's actions and ideologies" (p. 11).

Outsider-within status becomes an angle which affords a unique lens through which theorizing, as an act of resistance and reclamation can be done. Thus, theorizing from the subjugated

knowledge base of Black women's intellectual tradition entails everyday ideas shared "with one another as mothers in extended families, as othermothers in Black communities, as members of Black churches, and as teachers to the Black community's children" (p. 15). Insider-outsider status then, realizes the contingency between experience, knowledge, and consciousness for knowledge building (Christian, 1993).

Mitchell (2010) building upon Du Bois and Hill Collins' ideas of double consciousness and outsider-within status, respectively, suggests the importance of *improvisation* as epistemology of cultural aesthetics for African Americans. Mitchell states,

the cultural aesthetic of Black improvisation is crucial in that it guides the recognition of the importance of the existing (though sometimes devalued) knowledge as well as the ability to see the possibility of linkages to new insights and understandings...teachers who tap into the experiences fundamental to bridging the home and school lives of African American learners are cultural workers using their oppositional consciousness rooted in collective/communal understandings to enhance their teaching. (p. 615)

Linking experience to historical improvisation in the environment (here, he reflects on historical consciousness), allows Mitchell to attend to the nuances of lives lived through an "oppositional consciousness." Elsewhere oppositional consciousness enables culturally responsive discourse that subverts the politics of place (Mitchell, Wood, & Witherspoon, 2010). Experience through this lens emerges from collective and communal discourses. Elsewhere collective experience in educational pursuits from marginalized populations has been noted by hooks (1989), Hendry (2010), and Davis (2002).

Pragmatism "evades" modern philosophy as West (1989) states, because it seeks experience as a starting point for philosophizing. So where, American pragmatist John Dewey saw experience as the foundation for philosophy, and schooling as the democratizing machine, considerations of race and class dynamics are absent from his critique. Earlier I discussed how schools engender Anglo middle class dispositions covertly through a hidden curriculum (Apple,

2009). Through a “discourse of resentment” (McCarthy et al., 1997) education’s hidden curriculum reifies her identity in silencing the voice of cultural others. When theorizing about a dropout prevention program, and having narrowed down a conception of experience that challenges and critiques dominant notions of experience, I continue to explore the possibilities in the tradition of Black pragmatism as an under-theorized tradition in curriculum theory. The ideas behind the concepts of West’s (1989) prophetic pragmatism and Glaude’s (2007) shade of blue, inform my thinking in future chapters as I consider the experiences of students. The Black pragmatic tradition interrogates America’s contradiction: America as ideal and America as practice. West states, “Prophetic pragmatism calls for a reinvigoration of a sane, sober, and sophisticated intellectual life in America and for regeneration of social forces empowering the disadvantaged, degraded, and dejected” (p. 239). As it has been said that the other is precisely ourselves, I suggest that a dropout prevention program, which assumes alterity in its basic assumptions (a system outside of the dominant school system), represents the underbelly of American society (those considered marginal due to race and class). I use “underbelly” not in the pejorative, but rather as a starting point for the place that will allow America to explain itself to itself. What might an examination of discourses in a dropout prevention program and in the lives of urban youth offer in the way of knowledge generation from the margins?

CHAPTER 3: 'FIXING METHODOLOGIES:'

Fixing Methodologies¹⁰

This qualitative project seeks to understand personal experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994) to garner a richer understanding of what it means to be human in the world. People share experiences through the recounting of narratives – or the telling of stories – leading to research methods known as narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), that is, explorations into people's storied lives. A narrative is generally believed to be a story (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), “revealing truths about human experience” (Riessman, 2008, p. 10). Narratives can be located within “everyday speech, interviews, diaries, tv programmes or newspaper articles” (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2008, p. 1). Researchers turn to narrative research because of the possibilities it affords “to see different and sometimes contradictory layers of meaning, to bring them into useful dialogue with each other, and to understand more about individual and social change” (Andrews et al., 2001, p. 1). Maynes, Pierce, & Laslett (2008) highlight the role of narratives in documenting the relationship the social environment can have on individual agency. They explain the utility of narratives through structuralist aims:

Individual life stories are very much embedded in social relationships and structures and they are expressed in culturally specific forms; read carefully, they provide unique insights into the connections between individual life trajectories and collective forces and institutions beyond the individual. (Maynes et al., 2008, p. 3).

What constitutes a narrative? The answer is broad and varied. Narratives have notions of temporal causality (Maynes et. al, 2008). However, others critique positivist notions of linearity

¹⁰ This name derives from Barbara Christian's article entitled, “Fixing Methodologies: Beloved” (1993) in which she articulates an ethical reading of Toni Morrison's novel outside of traditional Marxist, feminist, psychoanalytic, etc. lenses due to their paradigmatic limitations. Instead, she employs an African cosmological lens for its “appropriateness for texts that are clearly derived from it” (p. 7). This lens enables her to attend to the nuances of the culture in which the novel is situated. Having done this, she can explore topics that can only emerge through the discourses of an African cosmological lens, which in her case is “that unspeakable event” – the Middle Passage journey of West Africans to America.

that exclude minority experiences, such as the oftentimes non-linear stories of trauma victims (Patterson, 2008; Carney, 2004). Narratives are also characterized by context, the social and structural conditions which guide people's lives, highlighting the importance of space and place on the role of identity (Dimitriadis, 2009; Freire, 2009). Approaches to analyzing stories can be on content (thematic), organization (structural), interaction (dialogical/performance), and aesthetic (visual), each with its own logic, assumptions, and implications (Riessman, 2008).

I begin with methods, the research design, data collection, and analysis. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of the ethical issues raised in this research and of the limitations of the design of this study.

Methods

Qualitative research methodology and ethnography informed my case study. I employed a critical discourse analysis of field materials including: interview transcripts and accompanying audio, field notes, video, and open access websites to better understand the program and its participants in multiple discourses. I mapped the dominant themes in the program's narrative through interviews, extensive time spent in the field totaling a year conducting observations, and participating in organizational activities. To understand student perspectives of the program, I conducted multiple focus group interviews, conducted follow up interviews with one participant through sustained contact for an approximate year. I employed a pragmatist framework to understand the multiple socially embedded layers of narrative attached to discourses of at risk.

A case may be defined more by its characteristics. Stake (1994) suggests epistemological justification for case study if "an object of study is a specific, unique, bounded system" (p. 237). Yin (2005) corroborates this idea, when discussing how single-case designs are uniquely positioned to address critical, unique, representative, or revelatory phenomena. This study

employs an embedded single-case design in which the primary unit of analysis is organizational discourse - the way discourse functions in LSYOU (to be identified through discourse analysis of interviews with the director, advisors, and program documents). A subunit consists of student narratives. Yin suggests that embedded designs help to “focus” the case study inquiry (p. 52). However, in using an embedded design as the researcher moves between primary and subunit inquiry, he cautions that researchers not lose sight of the original phenomena of interest, lest they run the risk of it becoming “the context and not the target of study” (Yin, 2005, p. 52). Thus the researcher will be careful to use subunit analysis to inform the larger question of discourses informing LSYOU’s narrative.

Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw (1995) explain that “Ethnographers are committed to going out and getting close to the activities and everyday experiences of other people” (p. 1). The aim of the “immersion” then, is to see and understand what experiences they deem as meaningful. Ethnographic inquiry is highly interpretive, that is highly subjective - a “human activity that includes intuition, past experience, emotion” (Wolcott, 2009, p. 30). As production is increasingly historically, culturally, and linguistically situated, Clifford (1986) reminds us that “we can no longer know the whole truth, or even claim to approach it” (p. 25). Thus the explication of fieldnotes through “thick description” (Geertz, 1973) is “not to determine “the truth” but to reveal the multiple truths apparent in others’ lives” (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). Thus, being ethnographically informed, this project requires extensive time in the field. As such, the researcher will have been involved with the program for approximately two years.

The method of analysis that will inform results is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Rogers et. al (2005) in their exhaustive review of critical discourse analysis in education state, critical discourse analysis “focuses on how language as a cultural tool mediates relationships of

power and privilege in social interactions, institutions, and bodies of knowledge” (Rogers et. al 2005, p. 367). Critical discourse analyses operates under three assumptions. The “Critical” component “locates power in the arena of language as a social practice” (Rogers et. al, 2005, p. 369). “Discourses” are organizing principles upon which knowledge is inscribed and exists within ideology, social, cultural, and political spheres. Analyses encompass describing relationships that exist among texts, interactions, and social practices; interpreting configurations of discourse practices; using description and interpretation to explain how and why social practices are constituted, changed, and transformed in the ways they are (Rogers et. al, 2005).

The poststructuralist tradition in which I locate myself as a researcher assumes that language mediates our reality (Spivak, 1993; Rogers et. al, 2005). Discourses serve as organizing principles, “where language, social institutions, subjectivity, and power exist, intersect, and produce competing ways of giving meaning to and constructing subjectivity” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 50). Because poststructuralism seeks to identify how power produces knowledge and the knowable subject, we can understand “how people are understood, or how knowledge is constructed about people” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 52). In the experiences of participants in a dropout prevention program then, we can begin to untangle the discursive webs of power that (re)constitute them as knowable subjects.

Research Design

Gaining Access

This project is an extension of a doctoral program research methods course in which I enrolled in Spring 2010 to begin conceptualizing my project design. A pilot case study assignment led me to inquire into LSYOU. For that assignment, students were required to develop research questions, conduct observations, interview, and write up the results. The

experience was literally life changing for me. I was intrigued by the discourse surrounding the program. My questions to the director elicited responses covering topics on funding, theoretical perspectives, and providing services to the children. However, I wanted to know more about the children. After having spoken to her, I decided to reformulate my questions before interviewing two program advisors. The advisors provided me with information about their interpretation of children's relationship to the program. At last, I felt a research puzzle beginning to emerge. I had a management perspective, an advisory perspective, and I would need a student perspective. So, I wondered, "What are the experiences of youth in a dropout prevention program?"

As a result of that course, I completed Human Subjects Training and later obtained an IRB for permission to proceed with a study of the experiences of youth in a dropout prevention program two years later, during the Summer of 2012. I obtained IRB permission (Appendix A) prior to the start of the summer program, and then contacted the program director for consent to act as a participant observer during the course of summer research. Participant observers spend "a good deal of time in the field participating and observing" (Johnson & Christensen, 2012, p. 209). My role as a participant observer began almost instantly as I was allowed to attend pre-program activities, such as the 2012 Opening Day event comprised of program counselors, staff, and the director. Opening day is a long and grueling day. The students arrive to campus, bags and luggage in tow and register, are assigned rooming, and then participate in an evening filled with activities. This inclusion allowed interaction and familiarity with program gatekeepers – "the individuals in the group who will allow the researcher in" (Creswell, 2007, p. 71), and also with gaining access to the students.

Emergent Design. As it goes with qualitative research, the summer component of the program, while providing me with the contextual familiarity of experience, did not completely

answer the research puzzle about the (dis)continuity of experience. Knowledge of youth experiencing the summer component of the program, in the midst of “experiencing the experience” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 80), only allowed for part of the research that explained (dis)continuity from home to the program but did not allow for a greater temporal understanding of the (dis)continuity of experience from experience in the program and beyond. I wanted to maintain sustained contact to determine how conceptions of experience emerged over time. Based upon the study I conducted over the summer of 2012, I maintained student contact. It is the student voice that sustains practice. Having spent the summer interacting with students whose academic futures were converging with a postsecondary institution, I concluded that a follow up interview with a specific member would inform the study. About seven months later, I conducted a follow-up interview with one student with whom I had the opportunity to engage during the course of the summer program.

Data Collection

Being in the Midst

Participant Observation. In order to understand the discourses of the program, I spent the majority of the program observing dynamics such as person-to-person interaction and programmatic aspects, as the two together constituted the narrative of the program. I observed the entire span of the six week summer program, during which time I took notes. My observations included: a preliminary informational session for interested parents, a staff training day for program staff, attendance at opening day when students arrived at campus for their residency, and also observations of students in different settings of the program. I attended programmatic aspects such as off-campus field trips and college tours. And finally, I attended the student graduation which concluded the students’ six week campus residency.

Observing Students. I spent substantial time observing the students during the course of their school/work day, and their evening extracurricular activities in which they participated, such as choir rehearsal, before retiring to their dorms in the evening. Specifically, I observed the dynamics of their counseling and wellness classes, which were identified through the pilot study to have been significant in the stories of past program participants. Additionally, I observed other forms of instruction such as the college tour field trip and casual outings, such as trips off campus, and student interactions in the respective boys' and girls' dormitories. I interacted with the students enough to build rapport as program gatekeepers allowed me complete access to come and go as I pleased and to participate in events at my discretion. As the students were participating in the program as the beneficiaries of its services, however, it was my desire to be close, yet maintain a respectful distance. As the program is experiential in nature, that is, it serves as a service-learning, teaching site, my presence posed little to no risk to students due to the diversity of people with whom they came into contact. Observations were recorded in a journal.

Students shared one or more background characteristics of family income level, single-parent homes, school grades, previous failures or suspensions, poor test scores, family and personal problems, and behavioral issues due to the criterion necessary for acceptance into the program. As required by LSYOU, the students were between 14-18 years of age. The demographics of the 2012 summer cohort of 42 students were 99% African-American 1% Caucasian. While students' backgrounds tended to reflect "at risk" characteristics reflected in the literature, they also contradicted the literature. For instance, some of the students came from low SES backgrounds, yet were academically exceptional. Some students exhibited behavior

problems, yet also excelled academically. The “at risk” student label tended not to be “one size fits all.”

Observing Advisors. Advisors were the literal glue that held the program together. They oversaw the peer advisors, and ultimately facilitated off campus weekend excursions such as going to the movies or visiting the roller skating arena. Advisors were always ensuring program logistics, were present in the dorms on weekends, and throughout the day. Many of the advisors have been with the program since nearly its inception. The four advisors’ backgrounds range from former teachers and former counselors. For this reason, they afforded a unique view of program dynamics.

Observing the Director. Prior to the start of the summer component of the program, I spent a great deal of time dialoging with the Director of At Risk Initiatives, Suzan Gaston, Ph.D. Originally a psychology major, Gaston also completed a Masters degree in counseling with a certification in education. She then served as a high school guidance counselor for about 8-9 years, before being promoted to the Director of Counseling for the Jefferson Parish school system, which she afterwards left to pursue doctoral studies. Interested in doing something that would “make an impact on students” due to her 14 year tenure with them, her dissertation research, *For At Risk Students: A Theory Based Alternative Structured School Model, Its Implementation and Evaluation*, in the Department of Administrative and Foundational Services, culminated into LSYOU. The program was designed to help “at risk” youth learn coping mechanisms that would mitigate the alienating effect of the bureaucratic high school structure. LSYOU has been operable since 1986.

Interviewing

I initially planned to interview students during their first week of residency on campus. However, at the bequest of the program director I conducted focus group interviews of students during week two of their immersion in the program, to allow for students' acclimation into "dorm life" and "being away from home." Gradually my bird's eye view narrowed, as my understanding developed, and I began to identify selected students with whom to conduct individual interviews. Due to variation in the students' schedules, interview locations ranged from my campus office, the lounges of the dorm room, dormitory libraries, and actual dorm rooms, places I hoped would be comfortable and ensure privacy for the participants.

The focus group interview protocol entailed obtaining participant consent, being read an overview of the interview process, and obtaining consent of being tape-recorded. Focus group questions (Appendix B) were designed to understand how participants understood the program as they were experiencing it. The topics included familiarity with LSYOU, previous job experience, feelings about LSYOU classes, knowledge of college life, opinion of program relationship dynamics, and questions about their backgrounds. I conducted five total focus group student interviews with students, three with boys, and two with girls (due to their respective availabilities of living in separate dorm buildings). The sampling strategy employed for focus group interviews was purposeful sampling.

As the research progressed however, snowball sampling was used to identify potentially information-rich sources for individual interviews. I conducted individual student interviews with four students. Of the four students, I conducted multiple interviews with three of them. Of the three, I sustained contact with one student beyond the scope of the summer component of the program. I interviewed him at a juvenile detention facility, which he entered approximately six

months after the summer component of the program. His narrative largely figures in chapter four. Individual interviews were informal and conversational. Interviews were tape-recorded and each lasted approximately 30-50 minutes. The sampling strategy for the research site was theory based (Gaston, 1987). I understand this project as a theoretical continuation of Gaston's (1987) position that educational structures are at odds with the lived experiences of status students, which necessitates the need to continuously explore the experiences of students circumscribed into marginalizing discourses. Of the six-week program, interviews were conducted during week two and week five. The underlying rationale for conducting the initial interview during week two was at the request of the program director, who suggested that a week's time might mitigate students' apprehension about being in a new setting which is normal during the first week on campus, and the latter was due to scheduling conflicts that would have arisen had I attempted to interview students during the final week of the program. Single-interview participants were interviewed twice, once using focus group protocol, and secondly with follow-up questions based upon original statements.

In addition to the interviews, students utilized journals. Teachers agreed to incorporate journal writing as part of the students' regular classroom instruction. Journal writing was incorporated into academic instruction time, and typically served as "bell ringers." Portions of those journal entries appear in later chapters. Journal writing served as a means to supplement interview data and observations. Journal protocol can be found in Appendix B.

Advisor interview protocol consisted of a single-session 40 minute focus group interview. Advisor protocol can be found in Appendix C.

Data Analysis

Data Analysis

For the intents and purposes of this dissertation, a narrative is defined as a story. As my project is a poststructural one, my primary analytical lens will be to understand the *content* of narratives – primarily focusing on the “what” that is spoken. Thus, I rely heavily upon Riessman’s (2008) explication of thematic analysis strategies. Using Maykut & Morehouse’s (1994) constant comparative method to conduct an inductive analysis of the data, I coded the data across focus and individual interviews, separated them into chunks of themes, and refined the categories. Data analysis will largely concern two main foci: interviews, document analysis, and to a lesser extent field notes.

Carole Cain’s (1991) ethnographic work with Alcoholics Anonymous members’ identity construction informs my work. Though Cain’s work is situated in the field of Anthropology and my own is Educational Leadership, Cain’s work and methodology have applicability for my research. Like Cain I heard stories everywhere, from students and from advisors. Stories were told in asides, in van rides, in dormitory lounges. There was clearly an overarching narrative of the program. And then there existed my own narrative of sense-making as a researcher “in the midst” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) of reconstructing experience. Thus, like Cain did in her study of Alcoholics Anonymous members, I completed a textual analysis of program materials: promotional materials such as an informational pamphlet, a video – LSU College of Education honors Irene W. and C.B. Pennington Foundation – to program sponsors, and transcribed interviews in order to understand how the program was storied, compared to how the participants storied themselves. Common assumptions and sequences were noted. Constructing the storyline of the LSYOU identity, entailed comparison of the stories of participants to those of the advisors,

to those in LSYOU marketing materials. I spent a year considering the abovementioned materials about LSYOU before, during, and after the summer program to ensure I understood the discourses of a dropout prevention/college access program.

To contextualize my knowledge about the discourses of LSYOU, I conducted research into the history of “at risk” discourse. I both researched the literature on “at risk” youth, and also how “at risk” emerges in the historical narrative. This enabled me to situate the students’ narratives and the programs’ narratives into historical context.

Ethics

Representation

What is the *ethical attitude* in narrative research (Josselson, 2007)? An ethical attitude in narrative research has increasingly come to be synonymous with “responsibility in human relationship” (Josselson, 2007, p. 538). As researchers are entrusted with “telling a life story, [and] retelling a life story” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 71), new dimensions of ethicality arise in dealings with human capital. Mainly of interest is how the Other is (re)constructed in the narratives of researchers. Riessman (1993) notes that “we cannot give voice, but we do hear voices that we record and interpret” (p. 8). Clifford and Marcus (1986) brought to light issues of representation in ethnography rooted in political and power discourses. The consequences of writing in an(Other’s) name are not uncommon and remind us of the delicate nature of researcher/researched relationships (Behar, 1995; Riesmann, 2008). Hendry (2007) questions: If we cannot fully represent a life why do we persist in this pursuit (p. 491)? The inherent power relations of researcher/researched interviewing and researcher reflexivity have been addressed by many. Hendry (2007) recognizes the implicit omniscience entailed in data coding, reduction, and

then putting it “back together again to make up a whole called *narrative*” (p. 491). Scheurich (1997) states,

The crux of the issue is the interpretive moment as it occurs throughout the research process. And into this moment the researcher brings considerable conscious and unconscious baggage – other related research, training within a particular discipline...epistemological inclinations...conceptual schemes about story-telling or power, social positionality...macro-cultural or civilizational frames...and individual idiosyncracies. (p. 73)

Fine (1994) approaches the issue of representation through an analysis of “working the hypen,” a space that acts as a critical site of reflection that allows researchers to “probe how we are in relation with the contexts we study and with our informants, understanding that we are all multiple in those relations” (p. 72). Issues of representation are particularly salient when dealing with populations traditionally stereotyped or misrepresented. Evidence of grappling with plentiful issues of representation encompassed in labeling is addressed by Weis, Fine, Wesen and Wong (2000):

Because we write between poor communities and social policy and because we seek to be taken seriously by both audiences, we know it is essential to think through the power, obligations, and responsibilities of social research. (p. 33).

For Weis et al. (2000) representation becomes less an exercise of simple reflexivity than a matter of being critically conscious of responsible representations, by “transform[ing] public consciousness and “common sense” about the poor and working classes, writ[ing] in ways that attach lives to racial structures and economies, and construc[ing] stories and analyses that interrupt and reframe the victim blaming mantras” (pp. 33-34). Fine (1994) suggests the next generation of qualitative researchers’ ethics can be negotiated through the rendering of analyses “rendered contradictory, problematic, and filled with transgressive possibilities” (p. 75).

Issues of validity

Questions of “truth” rooted in the historical consciousness of positivistic research have led to a postmodern skepticism about truth claims in narrative research. Polkinghorne (2007) defines validity as “the believability of a statement or a knowledge claim” (p. 474). How can truth be established in the inherently subjective endeavor of narrative research, through which stories are told and retold, interpreted and explicated? Richardson & St. Pierre (2005) offer a unique perspective from which to orient notions of validity:

We do not triangulate; we crystallize...Rather, the central imaginary is the crystal, which combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach. Crystals grow, change, and are altered, but they are not amorphous. Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns, and arrays of casting off in different directions. What we see depends on our angle of repose...” (p. 963)

Altheide & Johnson (1994) suggest that questions of validity be linked to their applicability of knowledge: Is knowledge useful? Does it liberate or empower? (p. 488). While these pragmatic questions fall within the realm of the subjective, Altheide & Johnson ultimately conclude that validity claims should be strongly situated within the researcher’s ideology.

Riessman (2008) echoes the notion of “situated truths” (that is, acknowledgement of the ontoepistemological situatedness of research in traditions and disciplines) and offers multidimensional ways of rethinking validity. For projects situated in realist epistemologies, Riessman suggests historical truth reflect correspondence, the ways in which participant narratives correspond to dominant narratives (acknowledging that certain voices have been excluded from dominant discourse), and “truth” can also be verified through the meanings participants attach to their narratives – realizing that truth is ultimately whatever meanings participants attach to their narratives. Riessman also suggests narratives be validated through their cohesion, persuasion, and presentation. However, lest totalizing narratives dominate this

suggestion, she acknowledges that stories of trauma victims are not always coherent. Coulter and Smith (2009) propose, “The purpose of narrative research is not to provide a single definitive answer but to open up possibilities for new questions and ways of thinking in the reader” (p. 585). Clandinin & Connelly (2000) suggest an attitude of “wakefulness” (p. 185) an ongoing self-reflexive perspective throughout the inquiry perspective.

Lather (2001) approaches “truth” with indeterminacy. She tries to “defamiliarize common sentiments of voice in order to break the hegemonies of meaning and presence that recuperate and appropriate the lives of others into consumption, a too-easy, too-familiar eating of the other” (p.206). Notions of truths and othering must be rethought as Christian (1988) notes dismissing claims of Western assumptions of othering through language and discourse, “For many of us have never conceived of ourselves only as somebody’s *other*” (p. 70). It is precisely an indeterminate, conceivable only from the vantage point of beginning at the ruins that an ethical approach becomes possible. Lather states (2001), “Faced with its own impossibilities, the practice of failure is pivotal...in negotiating the crisis of representation” (p. 203). Indeed, Britzman (1995) suggests that reality is a “contested and fictive geography” (p. 28).

It is for this reason that researchers have proposed new ways of reconceptualizing the narrative surrounding narrative research ethics. Responsibility in human relationships is the ethos that guides Donald’s (2011) decolonizing research sensibility, Indigenous Métissage. Donald proposes Indigenous Métissage as a research sensibility that honors “seemingly disparate standpoints together” (p. 3). Underscored by an ethical relationality, a decolonizing approach to research method interrogates the limits of knowable research. The spirit of a decolonizing sensibility can be understood as an ethical relationality which “seeks to understand more deeply

how our different histories and experiences position us in relation to each other” (Donald, 2011, p. 3).

Christian (1993) understands ethical relationality as approaching as earnestly as possible the research from the experiential cosmology of those studied. She explores theorizing through a reflexive lens from the worldview of “people of color” suggesting that “our theorizing...is often in narrative forms, in the stories we create, in riddles and proverbs, in the play with language” (Christian, 1988, p. 68). Yet this experience has always been eclipsed by a colonizing of the academy, through the privileging of theoretical traditions from the center. Christian (1998), in a very pragmatic sense that critiques the dominant power structure offers that she “has no set method...since for [her] every work suggests a new approach” (p. 78). Her improvisational approach challenges the way the center norms and defines the canon.

Lived Experience and Finding a Suitable Lens

How could I employ an ethical theoretical and methodological framework for children already situated in discourses of failure? I agonized over whether to engage Afrocentricity as a theoretical lens, because it was so adverse to the theoretical canon. It was marginal. I’d only seen it employed in particular cultural studies journals, a telling sign of its intellectual locale. The word alone, “Afrocentricity” was bold, forward, making two certain promises about its claims. 1) “Afro” would depict something of experience that had been traditionally minoritized, and 2) “centric” denoted a return to the center. And yet, I knew the word was loaded, charged with Western negative assumptions. Western understandings of African American experience did not afford the opportunity of seeing minoritized experience big but rather, small in all of its systemic singularity. While the institutionalized meanings associated with minoritized experience highlight a propensity towards expansive particularity and marginalization (Asante, 2007)

discourse surrounding “African American” experience in the public sphere has been equally as ambivalent (W.E.B. Du Bois, 1907). Through these conflicting lenses then, the negotiation of identity has been articulated as a *double consciousness* (Du Bois, 1907), a *triple quandary* (Boykin, 1986), and elsewhere as *borderlands* – vague and undetermined places created by the emotional residue of unnatural boundaries (Anzaldua, 1987). These competing discourses both eclipsed and illuminated possibilities of locating a theoretical framework that allowed for a better understanding of the agential in notions of the minoritized experience.

Afrocentric. “Centric” read to me like “electricity,” defined as: 1 : A fundamental form of energy occurring naturally (as in lightening) or produced artificially 2 : electric current (Merriam Webster, 2009, p. 110). Because Western hegemony eclipsed the lived experiences of people of African descent, it was necessary to challenge the artificial production of experience that accompanies hegemonic discourses. Afrocentricity then, offered possibilities – possibilities to engage Afro centered discourse, and to begin to articulate the fundamental agent in a discourse that is culturally responsible.

In order to discover the “interdependence of the everyday, taken-for-granted knowledge (Hill-Collins, 1990, p. 235),” the unit of analysis of lived experience, must be suitable to the lives studied. Afrocentricity, was uniquely suited to understand the youths’ experience, or as I see it, their “naturally occurring energy.” Maxine Greene (2000) also discusses the importance of contextual knowledge in terms of *seeing big*:

To see things or people small, one chooses to see from a detached point of view, to watch behaviors from the perspective of a system, to be concerned with trends and tendencies rather than the intentionality and concreteness of everyday life. To see things or people big, one must resist viewing other human beings as mere objects or chess pieces and view them in their integrity and particularity instead. One must see from the point of view of the participant in the midst of what is happening if one is to be privy to the plans people make, the initiatives they take, the uncertainties they face (p. 10).

Afrocentricity is defined as, “A *consciousness, quality of thought, mode of analysis, and an actionable perspective where Africans seek, from agency, to assert subject place within the context of African history*” (Asante, 2007, p. 16). At its heart, an Afrocentric perspective is concerned with centering the experiences of historically marginalized people who have become objects in their own stories. Central to an Afrocentric perspective is the role of *agency*, defined as the ability to act in a given situation. The agent can be said to be conscious, that is, to be aware of the mechanisms of domination and their apparatus of marginalization, and can make decisions independently of oppressive context.

Other times, the negotiation of African identity has been referred to as a “triple quandary,” that is, the negotiation of multiple realms of reality (Boykin, 1986). Consequently, an Afrocentric paradigm rejects the dislocation that objectification through a colonized gaze sustains, and its negative effects on the psyche.

As such, an Afrocentric paradigm incorporates five characteristics in which to situate any inquiry: (1) an interest in psychological location (is one operating from the center or the margins?); (2) a commitment to finding the African subject place; (3) the defense of African cultural elements; (4) a commitment to lexical refinement (how does language create reality?); and (5) a commitment to correct the dislocations in the history of Africa (Asante, 2007, p. 41). This framework encompasses the intellectual tools necessary to decouple fact from fiction in the written, verbal, and social narratives of African American students on their own experiences.

The necessity of an Afrocentric paradigm then, is its direct aim to emerge from the shadow of Western dominance, and to present as valid, other “social locations from which theorizing and critique are done” (Gordon, 2003, p. 13). Afrocentricity is not without a critique. In the way that Eurocentrism is hegemonic in its essentialist view, criticism suggests that

Afrocentricity extends the same monolithic view, albeit from an African perspective (Howe, 1998). However Asante (2005) asserts that Afrocentricity is not the polar opposite to Eurocentrism, but rather, "...the Afrocentrist is interested in centeredness as opposed to marginality, being as opposed to nonbeing, and an active instead of passive role for African culture and ideas in the world" (Asante, 2005, p. 200). Understanding this critique, I borrow tenants from Afrocentricity then, because it enables an agential perspective from which to understand lived experiences as a culturally responsive practice.

CHAPTER 4: DOCILE BODIES

Introduction

This chapter introduces the narratives of student participants and institutional gatekeepers. This chapter is divided into five sections: creating knowable bodies, disciplining unruly bodies, docile bodies, disembodied intersubjectivities, and a conclusion. The sections in this chapter create a map through which the polyphonic voices that inform youth subjectivity can be explored. In section one: creating knowable bodies, I briefly consider the implications of language as a social practice that governs discourse. In section two: disciplining unruly bodies, in article format, I consider the narratives of participants through critical materialist discourse, theorizing about the nature of their private experiences at the intersection of race, space, and place. I further consider a sketch of an idea of experience as a “language of interaction.” In section three: docile bodies, I shift away from private experiences as I consider youth identity construction in the public space of the program. In section four: disembodied subjectivities, using the experimental idea of the song as a discursive experiential form of knowledge generation, I place student narratives alongside the narratives of institutional gatekeepers. Here, experience speaks through me, through the dialoging participants, and through your own interpretation.

I now turn to experience.

I. Creating Knowable Bodies

Language provides us a way to understand the richness of social experience. We turn to discursive analyses because they help us interpret the social world in all of its richness and complexity. Discursive analyses as interpretive method enables a way to study how social relations through language, are constituted through shifting circuits of power – where meanings are contestable and complex. Through looking at language and the negotiation of its associated meanings we can then begin to understand the discourses through which people experience and interpret the world. We probably all agree by now, that the world unfolds itself daily to us in a vast unfolding of exteriority. Yet *how* we see – experience – a world nuanced by the complexities of class, gender, ethnicity, age, ability, is tempered by the narrative that has been handed down to us as *history*. Experience, can be understood as a culmination of historical moments. Enmeshed in swirling, concentric circles of experiential lenses, it becomes possible to articulate a different reality – one that doesn't represent itself as a totalizing narrative, a sovereign king-subject over a throne of discourse objects. "The problem [with history then] is no longer one of tradition, of tracing a line, but one of division, of limits" (Foucault, 1972, p. 7). Humans "exist in a dialectical relationship between the determination of limits and their own freedom" (Freire, 2009, p. 99). It becomes important to understand how people perceive these "limit-situations" at a given historical moment through an understanding of the "limit-acts," acts of "negating and overcoming, rather than passively accepting, the "given"" (Freire, 2009, p. 99).

Section two considers the experiences of young men at the social limits. These youth, whom would be categorized as "at risk" based upon their ethnicity, socioeconomic status, single-parent background, and behavioral issues (NCES, 1992) describe how they would typically negotiate a summer day in their particular neighborhoods. I consider language in two dimensions

– as something which permits insight into the conditions of reality, and as something which permits insight into interactions.

II. Disciplining Unruly Bodies?: Power, Knowledge, & At Risk Subjectivity

“Worried mothers and fathers maintain their children locked inside their apartments in determined attempts to keep street culture out.... *The constant struggle between the inside of the house and the outside streets is played out* throughout the community, as children grow older.”
(Fine & Weis, 1998, p. 165)

“I mean, when you in the ‘hood, trouble gonna find you...it’s gonna find you.”
(Research Participant)

Introduction

How can we understand the “at risk” body? As these bodies increasingly move from the private to the public it becomes useful to understand the fluidness of navigation between the two. I suggest that understanding the fluidity of these movements is to understand a type of what I am identifying as a *language of interaction*, a simple concept that suggests that embodied knowledge informs the ways in which experience is negotiated between spheres. The notions of the body bearing the effects of social systems became an important concept in understanding how “at risk” intersubjectivities become knowable. I will suggest using materialist discourse that the evidence of the body (Hobson, 2012) can become a site of knowledge. Why a focus on the body? It is “in word, in work, in action-reflection” (Freire, 2009, p. 88) that humans make their existence. I will offer suggestions for practice.

A Fictive Example of Bodied Experience

Toni Morrison, in her novel *Beloved* suggests that the body, as well as the mind, is the site of discursive practices, namely history. Sethe, the protagonist, is confronted with the

incarnate body of her daughter and antagonist, Beloved. Because Beloved's arrival allows Sethe to appease the guilt of a deed committed a long time ago, Sethe unselfishly feeds the insatiable Beloved, who in turn grows hungrier and more rotund by the minute, at Sethe's expense. In this example, Beloved's body is both representative of the material and symbolic discourses of Sethe's past. This is not the only time a fiction writer uses their craft as a platform for social commentary. Octavia Butler has also explored the relationship between the materialist practices of a social system and their effects on the body. Octavia Butler's (1988) fantasy novel *Kindred* explores the effects of a social system of slavery on the human body. After the present-day main character Dana, is transported through time to a Maryland plantation, and after enduring its oppressive context, finds her way back to her present-day Los Angeles home, she incurs the loss of an arm.

In each of these instances, the authors suggest that the effects of a social system have direct implications that not only affect the mind (being) but also the level of the body (becoming). I suggest that for writers Morrison and Butler their conception of embodied knowledge is not far-reaching but rather holds much veracity for the claims this paper makes.¹¹ Increasingly, scholarship has proliferated on the relationship between discursive historical practices (race, ability, gender, etc.) and embodied knowing vis-à-vis the body (Hobson, 2003, 2012; Erevelles, 2000, 2005; Gershon, 2012; Hendry, 2011) and have explored the implications of those relationships for democratic pedagogies (Freire, 2009; Fischman & McLaren, 2000; McLaren, 1988). This section contributes to this literature by providing an understanding of how

¹¹ I am aware that by drawing upon their literature, I am making the claim that fiction can be a site of knowledge in the production of experience, and implicitly suggesting that Morrison and Butler are social theorists. Barbara Christian (1988) notes, "I and many of my sisters do not see the world as being so simple. And perhaps that is why we have not rushed to create abstract theories... This is not to say we are not theorizing. Certainly our literature is an indication of the ways in which our theorizing, of necessity, is based on our multiplicity of experiences" (p. 76). Elsewhere, Christian (2000) notes that writers of color "used the sources of history to reimagine the terrain of the past in relation to concerns of the present" (p. 413).

private experience mediates public spaces and through what processes this knowledge becomes available. Using data from three focus groups and individual interviews, I engage the lived experiences of adolescent males in a college access program. I wonder: 1) how do urban males talk about their everyday summer places, 2) what activities frame how they engage these places, 3) and what discursive practices inform practices in place? What can the localized “at risk” body tell us?

Theoretical Approach

Oftentimes theorization on the subject is mediated between two discourses: rational positivism and the poststructural subject created through discourse. The Cartesian subject explains his “being” by “knowing”, as Engels critiques (1935, p. 52). The limitation of the Cartesian subject is his detachment from the world of experience, or that “experiment with the world to find out what it is like” (Dewey, 1916, p. 114), because he is relegated to the silo of his thinking mind. Conversely, the poststructural subject exists within “anonymous and autonomous discourses, disciplines, and techniques” (West, 1989, p. 225), always-already circumscribed into ideology neglecting the micro-level everyday practices of human ingenuity and agency (De Certeau, 1984). What is needed is an understanding of the subject who lives in a place, and is constituted through action. What can account for an understanding of experiencing the materiality of life?

Historical Materialism. I take a historical materialist approach in understanding how at-risk bodies interact with their world. A materialist conception of history suggests “that the production of the means to support human life and, next to production, the exchange of things produced, is the basis of all social structure” (Engels, 1935, p. 54). It also suggests that historical materialism is “the ultimate cause and the great moving power of all important historic events in

the economic development of society, in the changes on the modes of production and exchange, in the consequent division of society into distinct classes, and in the struggles of these classes against one another” (Engels, 1979, p. 13). A historical materialist approach acknowledges that knowledge formation occurs in material circumstances, thus explaining how “knowing” is rooted in the political consciousness of “being,” that is, how people come to know the world through direct interaction with it (Dewey, 1991; Villiers-Botha & Cilliers, 2010), albeit, as a consequence of economic relations.

Social Reproduction. Yet a historical materialist approach is underscored by “modes of production,” that labor which necessarily generates capital. Social relationships are implicated in the labor/capital dialectic as they are defined through the antagonisms inherent between social classes (Engels, 1935). I turn briefly to economic reproduction theory because it offers the philosophical tools necessary to better understand the relationship between knowing by being through socioeconomic status. It is in embodied cultural capital that Bourdieu’s concept of habitus informs my understanding of economic materiality at the level of daily practice. Bourdieu initially discusses habitus as “a durable training” (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, p. 31). Johnson notes that Bourdieu’s habitus is an acquired self-governing system of tastes and dispositions which function as organizing practices for behavior, adaptable to any circumstance (in Bourdieu, 1993). The materiality of habitus manifests itself for example as IQ or achievement scores (see Bowles & Gintis), as socioeconomic status is a strong predictor of academic achievement, yet this linkage simply implies that greater capital leads to more embodied knowledge available through objectified goods and in and of itself does not account for bodily knowledge as a discursive practice. Yet, how are we to account for an understanding of a relationship between knowledge and embodied experience?

Geographical Philosophy. What is lacking is a greater understanding of the relationship between knowledge, experience (body), and experience in place. For this understanding I turn to geographical philosopher, Edward Casey (2001) who suggests that a more nuanced understanding of *habitus* as a notion of experience mediates the relationship between place and knowledge through an understanding of the “geographical self.” Casey suggests the incorporation of *habitus* is partially a result of the material circumstances (localization of place) in which *habitus* is learned. Though Bourdieu does not mention place, Casey suggests place is an implicit part of *habitus*. Citing Bourdieu he writes,

It is there at the start as the scene of inculcation, the place of instruction that embodies “the structures constitutive of a particular type of environment (e.g. the material conditions of existence characteristic of a class condition” Bourdieu, 1977, 72). It is present at a later point when a given *habitus* has been fully formed and is continually re-enacted in similar circumstances – that is, when durable dispositions are “lastingly subjected to the same conditioning, and hence *placed* in the same material conditions of existence” (85; emphasis added). A given *habitus* is always enacted in a particular place and incorporates the features inherent in previous such places, all of which are linked by a *habitudinal* bond. (Casey, 2001, p. 686)

Through this lens, intersubjectivity formation and material practices are intimately related and inform each other by a process that Casey calls *habitation*. If *habitus* is a shift of exteriority (knowledge) becoming internalized as durable dispositions, *habitation* then is a “re-externalization – of taking the *habitus* that has been acquired and continually re-enacting it in the place world” (p. 687). Casey argues once we hold a place (through *habitus*) in our thoughts, we experience it through *habitation* (a re-externalization), and that through a process of *idiolocality*, the subject “incorporates and expresses” a place whereby “the subject alone can carry the peculiarities of place in its very flesh... a condition of readiness to reappear at the flash of a mere impression” (p. 688).

Postmodernism and Enfleshment. McLaren’s (1988) notion of enfleshment also suggests a “dialectical relationship” exists between the mind and the body, occurring, “not just at

the level of the materiality of the flesh, but through both the corporeal embodiment of symbols and metaphors into the flesh and the “fleshing out” of ideas at the level of cultural forms and social structures” (p. 61). McLaren (1988) explains the possibility of reconciling a materialist approach to discourse through a dialectic that both informs and is informed by lived experience:

Discourses do not sit on the surface of the flesh or float about in the formless ether of the mind but are enfolded into the very structures of our desire inasmuch as desire itself is formed by the anonymous historical rules of discourse. It is in this sense, then, that the body/subject becomes both the medium and the outcome of subjective formation (p. 61).

Reconciling the agential subject to conditions of discourse, McLaren explains to “unproblematically identify” (p. 62) with a symbol is to be in a state of enfleshment, while also accounting for possibilities of resistance through the multitudinous choices of existence that exist at intersections of political, economic and ideological practices. Casey agreeing acknowledges that the geographical subject’s racial, gendered, and classed body encounters place in “highly differentiated and culturally freighted ways” (p. 688). Thus, identity and place inform each other at the ideological and material levels through the practices of the body.

Place. An understanding of knowing that comes from being a part of “the human-world relationship” (Freire, 2009, p. 85) implicates knowledge, body, and place. Our relationship to structures (discursive) has been an increasing focus of philosophical inquiry, as in the case of Foucault, who studied societal structures relative to the actions of developing societies; or Bourdieu who suggested that material structures become internalized conceptual structures (habitus), or De Certeau (1984) who focuses on the possibilities inherent in the everyday practices of lived spaces within structures of discourse. Even “the process of understanding curriculum occur[s] within the context of place” (Kincheloe, Pinar, & Slattery, 1994, p. 408); knowledge of “geographical rootedness” has much to teach us about the way bodies function in place, space, and discourse. To employ the type of critical pedagogy of place that Gruenewald

(2003) proposes is to “contribute to the production of educational discourses and practices that explicitly examine the place-specific nexus between environment, culture, and education” (p. 10).

There are many ways to conceptualize place. Place attachment is defined as the emotional bond one has with their environment (Scannell & Gifford, 2009). While place attachment is the affective bond one has with their environment, place can encompass one’s residence, the neighborhood and its networks, or other relevant environments (Lalli, 1992). Cultural definitions of place attachment suggest that symbolic relationships exist between groups and places and evoke a culturally valued experience (Low, 1992). Thus place encompasses both “the social and the particular” (Kinchelo, Pinar, & Slattery, 1994, p. 410). To understand one’s relation to place is to understand:

The relationship with one’s physical surroundings is essentially viewed as bound up with concrete experiences. Thus, the focus is on those places which can be directly experienced by a person and which are subjectively meaningful to him or her. It is primarily through this concrete relationship that the environment attains its *symbolic* significance as a substrate of social, emotional and action-related contents (Lalli, 1992, p. 285).

Mobility in place is understood practically and discursively, as moving through place can be known as “tactics of social navigation” (Langevang & Gough, 2009, p. 741), showing the “links between spatial mobility and social and economic mobility” (Gough, 2008, p. 243). Place can help us to understand people’s “socialization, sociability, and social problems” (Oliver, 2006, p. 934). Understanding a relationship to place then, has implications for understanding the nuanced manners in which people experience the world.

As students move from the private to the public, I wondered how their bodies encountered place. I desired to know how enfolded bodies moved through a look at engagement of place, of an understanding of their ways of being as a discursive practice. 1) How do urban

males talk about place, 2) what activities frame how they engage place, 3) what discursive practices inform being in place? What can the “at risk” body tell us?

Unruly Bodies And a Notion of Trouble

“The constant struggle between the inside of the house and the outside streets is played out throughout the community, as children grow older.” (Fine & Weis, 1998, p. 165)

Student identities are identities bound in action. In three focus group interviews with male students, I’d asked how they’d heard about the program. Most disclosed they had heard about the program from family members, such as parents and uncles, school counselors or neighbors, or siblings who had previously been in the program. It seemed that students had even entered the program with the admonition of adults that participation in the program would keep them out of trouble. The topic of trouble emerged from a student who said he signed up for the program so he “could stay outta trouble, stay out of the streets.” I followed up with a question to all of the boys:

Me: So in terms of staying out of trouble, how many of you would say, trouble was in your area?

All: Yes (collectively).

Student 1: Trouble is everywhere. It’s whether you fall in trouble, but trouble tends to find me. But lately I been stayin’ out of trouble since I been here. (Another student agrees).

Me: So can you tell me how trouble tends to find you?

Student 1: Trouble seems to find me when people come up to me talking that stuff I don’t want to hear. And if you ain’t saying somethin’ I don’t want to hear, I don’t have time for it...Nah, I’m just playing. But..me, I just don’t like when you’re playing with me wrong. So, what that mean is, so like when somebody is constantly, constantly picking at you, somebody have something of yours and they don’t want to give it back, that’s when two people may have a problem. And that’s my story.

Student 2: I mean, when you in the 'hood, trouble gonna find you...it's gonna find you.

And later, the notion of trouble emerged again when discussing how the boys perceived participating in the program, one student said "...it's an interesting program. Because it helps you stay outta trouble ...". Another student said, "It keep[s] you out the streets. It keep[s] you outta trouble. It always keep[s] you doing something." The notion of trouble also emerged in student responses to the question: Describe what a typical summer day is like for you? Responses revealed that typical summer days were spent either "getting into trouble" or "chillin." Students' responses suggested that group activities were a normal part of their routines whether getting into trouble or "chillin." Getting into trouble was most commonly exhibited when the boys left their homes and went out into public spaces with no predetermined activities:

Getting into Trouble

"...then go to the store, then go to my friend house, you know and we'll find something to do, and basically just get in trouble. It always leads to getting in trouble with me."

"For me? Talkin, chillin, you know. Doin whatever we be doin. Like getting in trouble and stuff. You know, goin places that I ain't spose to be. Doin things that I don't pose to be doin. It's just the everyday thing."

Trouble. [Me: Can you speak more to that?] Fighting and a whole bunch of other stuff. Like just being around the neighborhood and stuff... Me, I didn't try to get in trouble I just...it was in my life man.

"Chillin" was more commonly associated with staying inside though not necessarily being inactive, and thus not getting into trouble, or going outside and engaging in named activities – be it playing basketball with friends or "chillin" – chillin can be understand as a discursive metaphor, implying relaxation or not doing anything that would get one in trouble. Thus, "chillin" denotes not getting into trouble, but also being in the presence of friends. Langevang

(2008) also found that “sitting” for the urban males she studied denoted both ‘doing nothing’ and yet functioned as a means of doing something, which is, seeking fellowship amongst one’s peers.

“Chillin”

“...walk around to my girlfriend house, chill, go to my cousin house and all that.”

“...For me, just living around the house just chillin. For me, I’mma chill. I don’t get..I don’t be tryna to get into trouble, but sometimes they have girls outside and I like to go and do stupid stuff like, like I’m not a bad child. I just make dumb mistakes.”

“basically, nothing really. I just sit down and watch tv all day. Probably go out a little and play basketball. I don’t really do too much of nothing to get in trouble.”

“I just be chillin. Talk on the phone to females. Play basketball and just chill, ya heard me. I stay outta trouble, go on the block with my goons and just chill.”

How could I begin to understand this notion of trouble, and the related notion of mobility relative to their engagement of public spaces? In trying to understand this notion of trouble and of how it seemingly ‘finds’ the young men, bodies in motion in public spaces, from what my data suggested, the “streets” or public spaces became places of empowerment and/or transgression as the next narrative will show.

In the Streets vs. “Chillin” on the Porch

The binary of “chillin” be it inside or engaging in “safe” activities outside, relative to trouble characterized by being outside with no specified activities, also manifested itself in the notion of being in “the streets” or “chillin” on the porch or inside the house. Oliver (2006) and Langevang (2008) also found that notions of “the streets” are characterized as being transgressive to American norms. Being in “the streets” in this instance signaled a transgression of dominant norms. Being on the porch signified “safe” behavior. In the excerpt that follows, one student, whom I’ll call P.J. begins a narrative about himself in which he explains the trajectory of events which lead up to his activities in “the streets.” His is a body in motion:

PJ: Well, just uh like, *just started off with me just moving around a lot*, always chillin with a lot of people. Like I ain't never chilled with nobody my age, I always chilled with people older than me. My mama always used to tell me to be wit' people my age but I ain't never listen. That's probably why I got introduced to all this violence and stuff, doing all that wrong stuff. Most of the time I just used to be gettin in trouble doin stuff I wasn't supposed to be doin.

As P.J. continues his narrative, he explains that he mostly hung out with his "homies," – "all I had was old[er] cousins to hang out with" all of whom participated in the same types of activities that involve getting into trouble. He explains it was the participation in deviant activities that separated his friends from non-friends.

Me: Why were you hanging out with older people?

PJ: I don't know. Like they don't be –they wasn't doin' the stuff that we was doin' back then.

Me: Like what?

PJ: We was mostly just thuggin' it

Me: So what where they doing?

PJ: *I guess they were just sittin in the house. They was on the porch. We been off the porch.*

Me: What does [on the porch mean]?

PJ: Oh like, he ain't really out there into the streets yet. You know, he just - he letting it all pass him by, like chillin. We've been off the porch. That mean you know we got off into the game early. Like we been out, we been out here doin things that we wasn't supposed to be doing. That's basically what it means, like that. That's probably the only thing. Thuggin it, enjoying it, breakin into houses and stuff. All that stuff.

Me: Why'd you break into houses?

PJ: Just for to do it. I ain't have no money or nothing.'

While P.J. and his cousins were 'thuggin' it 'in the streets' and 'off the porch' his non-friends were characterized as having been 'on the porch' or 'sittin in the house.' He explained that behavior 'in the streets' was largely deviant, consisting of 'breaking into houses and stuff. All

that stuff.’ In P.J.’s view, his non-friends were engaged in presumably safe behavior, characterized as ‘letting it all pass him by, like chillin.’ P.J. explicitly acknowledges that he and his friends had ‘been out here doin things that we wasn’t supposed to be doing.’ P.J. attributes his behavior to perceived lack, to having ‘no money or anything.’

Movement – walking as agency. I suggest that movement serves as a technology of the self that enables the youth to “travel abroad to discover in distant lands something whose presence at home has become unrecognizable” (De Certeau, 1984, p. 51). One could attribute the boys’ need for movement as the bodily response of living in low income environments. In other words, movement appears to be the avenue through which the boys break the monotony of their days and by which they move into the public sphere. This act is empowering, a form of *social navigation*, in which the boys as agents can act in relation to immediate constraints and possibilities” (Langevang & Gough, 2009, p. 742). In explaining the possibilities that exist in the bodily act of walking, De Certeau (1984) suggests that walking is a discursive act by which space is appropriated. The act of walking unlocks the possibilities of engaging “spatial order” (through the routes that one can take) making paths exist or making new ones emerge through “crossing...drifting away, or improvisation of walking privilege, transform or abandon spatial elements” p. 98). As the young men state, walking allows them to “find something to do,” that is, walking acts as a panacea to their social dilemma.

Movement – walking as lack. And yet De Certeau (1984) suggests, “To walk is to lack a place...the process of being absent and in search of a proper” (pp. 103-04). If walking is “lack,” an “absent” searching for a “proper,” I must identify the type of lack and understand the “proper” that fills the “absence.” Two forms of lack were identified in the narrative: material and economic. The boys’ materiality of walking is rooted in the reality of perceived lack, because

finding something to do, arises from having nothing to do. Indeed, when another boy suggested that he'd broken into houses "Just for to do it. [Having] no money or nothin'", a perception of *material* lack seems to characterize movement. He later said, "It was my just taking stuff and I had to stop that because I got incarcerated. Then I just started you know, they started, My mama 'n them, they just started you know they'll help me out with anything I need or my brother, just so I wouldn't have to go out there and do nothing I don't have no business doing. That was mostly it though." When another boy stated, "I used to steal a lot and take stuff that wasn't mine. My mama starting finding out that though. I ain't ever really get caught. I always ran away somehow," his walking can also be understood as physical expressions rooted in the manufacturing of economic gain that he perceives is lacking. The boys' movement and forays into the public is often underscored as *emotional*. Whether "chillin" or out on the streets, the forays into the public are characterized by communalism, the need to connect.

Place – Bounded Geospatiality. The boundedness of place however is important. Place operates within the boundaries of a localized neighborhood context. It emerged as inside the home/staying on the porch/outside playing basketball/or running the streets. Being inside seemed to equate to staying out of trouble. Playing basketball was also equated with staying out of trouble, yet the further away from the home they got, 'running the streets' with the vastness it assumes seemed to imply greater incidences of self-individuality but also criminality. Yet also discernible was the proximity of students' movements in location to their homes. The boys tended to be inside the home or outside of the home, but *within* the geographical constraints of the neighborhood, thus close to their homes. However, because of the boundedness of their movements within the neighborhood context- of going outside to a place not too far away from the reality of their material circumstances – which as habitus and habitation explain are always in

their purview, - the proximity to home might explain how trouble will find them. As the boys are literally within different proximities to the same material structures from which they seek escape, the material circumstances of their reality will replay itself to them daily over the summer.

Thinking there is nothing to do, they will go outside. Going back into the house and realizing the same reality awaits them, they will repeat yesterday's activities. It will become "just an everyday thing" from which they seek escape, only to later return, and repeat.

Place. Insidedness/Outsidedness. Insidedness is repressed lack or staying out of trouble, which then makes it a subversive act to the dominant narrative of African male incarceration, as one boy stated earlier, he does "nothing really," he doesn't "*really do too much of nothing to get in trouble.*" Outsidedness is a new "representational space" in which the males can carve out new identities. It is characterized by group activities, or as De Certeau (1984) explains, outsidedness serves as the introduction of "an other in relation to this "I" (p. 99). Outsidedness puts the boys in community with their peers and with the larger social landscape. As one boy states, "*go to my friend house, you know and we'll find something to do, and basically just get in trouble.*" And another one states, "*just started off with me just moving around a lot, always chillin with a lot of people.*" Fine & Weis (1998) finds that references to African American males' encounters with streets often imply street violence in narratives that are not "only about self, but... also about others who are walking the streets" (p. 64). The streets then, are as much about community, as they are a place to escape from aloneness. Langevang (2008) also notes that sitting amongst friends served as an alternative to sitting inside alone. Yet the possibilities of social navigation that the outside exteriority presents to them can backfire and lead to physical imprisonment - the very same type of confinement the boys try to escape when leaving the home to go into the public is actually the very condition in which they often find themselves facing -

confinement. African American males (1 in 15) are twice as likely as Hispanic males (1 in 36) and about seven times as likely to be incarcerated than White males (1 in 106) (The Pew Center, 2008). For these young men trouble is pervasive (it will “find you”) and is either knowingly engaged by going further out or avoided through the act of “self-policing” by staying in or engaging in safely defined activities like playing basketball or “chillin” on the block, which is ultimately self-policing or surveillance (Foucault, 1995).

Movement Colliding with Discipline – Two Examples of Run-ins with the Law

J.L.’s Narrative. The consequences of being on the streets can lead to run-ins with the law. One interview conducted with a boy I’ll call J.L, an A student who also has a history of juvenile incarceration, illustrates the ideas of a body in motion and of interaction at the intersection of place. His is a body in motion and illustrates perceived lack, movement into the public, communalism, a run in with the law, and juvenile detention.

Movement

Me: Can you tell me about the events that led up to the house arrest?

JL: Um...well, I was comin’ in the house late, and uh, I had tardies in school. I had got suspended. Like a couple of days before I had came in here.

Me: Okay wait. You were coming in the house late. So your neighborhood has a street curfew?

Run in with law

JL: Um, it ain’t really like a street curfew but like if the police see you, and they’ll arrest you, or you know they’ll just bring you home. But, they had arrested me and brought me to city hall and that’s how I got the charge. And after that, when I had went to court, they brought all that up in court, and the judges sent me here [to juvenile detention].

Me: What’s the street curfew?

JL: Like on school days I think it’s like 8 or 9. And on like weekends it’s like 11pm.

Me: And did this happen on a school day?

JL: {Shakes head yes}

Me: So what would you normally be doing after 8 on a regular school night? Would you typically be out of your house? Or would you typically be inside your house?

Communalism

JL: Like, I'll be out like, not like a Monday or a Tuesday, cause those days I usually be sleepy and stuff so I'll go in the house early. Some days I just stay out. Be with my friends. Or I'll be with my younger uncle that I'm close to.

Me: So when you were arrested were you near your house?

JL: I be near my house, like where I be hanging out. It's like down the street, like around the block from my house.

Me: Just like one block?

JL: Yeah.

Me: So when you think about the dropout prevention program now and you being [in juvenile detention] do you ever associate the two? Do you ever think about that program and what's happened since then?

JL: I feel like, I'm still happy I went through the program because If I probably wouldn't have went to it I probably would have been in here earlier. And I still feel like I still can have a future and that I can still do something – this is just a minor setback.

Me: A minor setback? How do you avoid these minor setbacks?

JL: I just gotta start comin' in the house on time, *like if I play sports I usually stay out of trouble*. Like when I was playin' football everything was good.

Me: So when you play sports you stay out of trouble, so what is the problem coming from?

Perceived lack

JL: It's like after school, at school I be good, I don't get in no trouble at school. *When I come home I get in trouble*. But if I'm playing sports, I be at practice or something. And that give me something to do.

Me: So at home you don't have anything to do?

JL: Yeah. Something like that.

Me: So you don't have anything to do, you're at home during the week, so what are you doing when you don't have anything to do?

Movement

JL: I'll probably play my game for a lil' while until I get bored of that. And then I'll just go hang out with my friends.

Me: So what are y'all doing now when y'all hang out?

JL: We just – we don't really do nothing. Lately we ain't been doin nothing. It's been – ain't been havin nothing to do.

JL's narrative begins and ends with the idea of lack. Like the other students JL's movement arises from a perceived lack of 'nothing to do'. Thus, as JL moves from the inside his home to the outside, he seeks to remove himself from the representational space of one who is lacking to put himself in contact with 'an other'. So he transgresses space, but not too much, only traveling about a block or so away from his home. And yet, his representational space, at odds with the dominant social narrative that makes young boys who hang on the block the object of police surveillance, leads to arrest, a ride home in the police car, or in the confines of city hall. Outsidedness functions as a normative social narrative in which he is a targeted object of surveillance. Outsidedness functions discursively as agency to JL as an act of freedom to escape boredom, however. These two discursive analyses of outsidedness highlights two social narratives colliding in place, suggesting that social tension exists as an everyday antagonism to others who face JL's social circumstances. When JL's time is occupied, he admits to staying out of trouble. During football season, JL's schedule tires him out and keeps him out of trouble: "Right after school, like we stay after school, an um we just practice till like 5:30 or like 6. And after that I'll probably go home, take a shower and play my game til' I go to sleep 'cause I be sleepy." The echo of having something to do can be found in JL's hopes of attending college. He expresses his desire to escape the city: "I mean, I do want to go to college and just be on my own for a lil while and not have to worry about all the family problems and everything. And, I'll probably have more stuff to do..."

PJ's Narrative. PJ, the young man mentioned earlier whose narrative revealed being in “the streets” as opposed to “chillin on the porch” reports that his deviant behavior stopped with him having landed in juvenile detention at age 13:

Q: So, like, how was your mom feeling about this when it happened?

A: Oh, she ain't never know. My mom, I think my mom found out I was breakin' into houses like, let me see, uhhhh, like when I was like 13 or something, and that's when I went to jail, yeah, 13 when she found out cause that's when I went to jail.

Q: How long were you in jail?

A: For a year. But after that, I just, it ain't change me, it just made me like, it just made me know the consequences of doin' stuff. Like I used to talk to a lot of people up in there – all of them, most of them, had juvenile life.

Q: Juvenile life?

A: Yeah.

Q: What's that?

A: That's like, say you up in there til [age] 21. And that's what they was bout to give me. But they went on and gave me two years. Then they dropped the two years down to 18 months. And they took another 6 months off. That's how I came to do a year. They used to always tell me like, ‘man you don't need to come back’. I used to be like, ‘yeah, I ain't comin back’. I ain't been back since like, two years, or a year and a half.

Q: Good stuff. So you say it didn't change you, or it did - it just taught you consequences to your actions?

A: Yeah like, it didn't change me. It just made me like, not do the stuff that really don't matter. That's why I just – that's why all I do is just be rappin' and stuff. That's the only thing that keeps me occupied.

After incarceration, he said he began to focus in school and his grades rose. He now describes his primary activity, as one that keeps him occupied. Again, outsidedness is equated to trouble, and insidedness “chillin at the house and stuff” is equated to discipline. After juvenile incarceration, PJ also a self-proclaimed A student, says in his spare time, “That's why all I do is just be rappin' and stuff. *That's the only thing that keeps me occupied.*”

Me: What do you rap about?

PJ: Like all the things I used to do. Like all the things like I be rappin about the things so like the younger people wouldn't go through the same thing and do it. Stuff for to let people hear, that people feel, stuff that they goin' through. That's mostly what I be rappin' about.

Me: You want to share a rap?

PJ: *When the devil on my back, it has my mind racing. Looking at the way I'm livin' got me thinkin' will I make it? With cooperation and faith no need to worry about hatin'. Hustlin' on the block got me like forget the consequences, I'll make it.*

Me: so now what are you doing in your free time?

PJ: Studio. Or in the house just chillin. Well, Probably either in the studio or hangin' out with my family, enjoying the time that I got with them.

Me: So, when you go back home, what do you think that's gonna be like?

PJ: Just rappin' and stayin' outta trouble...

Who or What is trouble?

So, who is this elusive trouble, awaiting the guys at every turn? I suspect his apparatus is a subtle one, a nuanced one. Yet his trace remains in the footprints of the kids "chillin" on the block. He seems to emerge in popular culture portrayals rooted in suburbia's discourses of resentment (McCarthy et. al, 1997) against urban cultural others, in the angst of working-class kids who matriculate from school to home and lack a wealth of extracurricular resources to keep them occupied. The kids seem to exist within double consciousnesses. On the one hand they go to school with the idea that one day life will be better, yet at the everyday level they must negotiate delayed gratification (Cusick, 1973) with the immediacy of the everyday, as in the case of the self-proclaimed reformed PJ whose rap hints at an unsettledness in the battle with perceived lack, "*Hustlin' on the block got me like forget the consequences, I'll make it.*" Or JL who understood his incarceration as a "minor setback" to his future plans of attending college yet also exhibits his double consciousness when he acknowledges that when he is at home he "get[s] in trouble" because he has nothing to do. Even though he acknowledges that his juvenile records

will be expunged when he is of age, he seems to fail to grasp that his continuous lack of something to do at home, which he equates to “trouble,” and the subsequent activities he engages as a subversive act to boredom may ultimately be the very thing which leads to a pattern of adult incarceration.

Troubling Notions of “Trouble?”

How can we think of “the streets?” of “insidedness/outsideness,” of being “on the porch” or “in the house?” We first need to ask in what discourses “the streets” emerge in the literature, and then consider their implications. I provide three examples. “The streets” emerge in the literature as 1) As a place where drugs and violence proliferate in the neighborhood of working-class families (Fine & Weis, 1998); 2) as an historical site from which deviant youth subcultures emerge from poor youth (Langevang, 2008); 3) a social institution belonging to a specific ethnic group – Black males (Oliver, 2006). This sampling of the literature suggests that notions of “the streets” emerge in deficit discourses surrounding two very specific groups: working class and Black males. As my data suggested, economic or intellectual lack was often the precursor to transgressing space. Activities in the streets did not speak specifically of drugs or violence, however it did sometimes suggest deviance. My participants were Black males who took to the streets to be in communion with friends and to find something to do.

Public vs. Private. Giroux (2004) notes, many are attending to culture, understanding it as “an educational site where identities are being continually transformed, power is enacted, and learning assumes a political dynamic...both a site of contestation and a site of utopian possibility” (p. 60). However, the historical narrative of being “in the streets” is one comprised

of a narrative of subcultural deviance as merely symbolic acts of resistance as Langevang (2008) notes. On the one hand then, a discussion about the streets can be interpreted as a matter of normalizing culture. As

“Young people on the street tend either to be projected as the potential victims of unruly gangs and other dangers, or alternatively as themselves the problem, since young people’s visible presence on the street is perceived as being a threat to social order” (Langevang, 2008, p. 228).

Thus, the social posturing of minoritized cultures who negotiate existence on the streets, may conflict with the dominant cultural norms of acceptable behavior. What makes notions of the street problematic is that it is antithetical to normative socially appropriate behavior, governed by a long-running narrative in which “other/different” is conceived as inappropriate. I will explain. It has been argued that the exteriority of the public space serves as an alternative Black male socialization institution (Oliver, 2006). Oliver defines “the streets” as a “network of public and semipublic social settings, in which primarily lower and working-class Black males tend to congregate” (p. 919), an institution in many ways similar to institutions of the school, the church, or the family. Indeed, the activities characterizing the speech that accompanies place are fraught with communalism, and engagement in similar activities, bond forming practices which have salience for identity formation (Dimitriadis, 2009; Langevang, 2008). Langevang (2008) suggests, “For many young people, public spaces remain an important venue for the assertion, negotiation, and contestation of youth identities” (p. 228).

An alternative view of the streets in the context of cultural negotiation suggests that discursive practices aid in the community-building efforts of people in place. Yet, the communalism of street culture with its migrating bodies is antithetical to the normalized capitalist discourse that assigns “little value or worth” to socially, economically, and physically disabled bodies “because they are not seen as economic assets in the community” (Erevelles,

2005, p. 436). However, because the participants in this study overwhelmingly came from single-parent backgrounds, the communalism they received from their male peers can be understood as necessary to their own self-narratives of learning masculinity and gleaming constructs of manhood from their male peers. Evidence of the need to dialogue is evident in a participant who having been placed into incarceration at the age of 13 explains the knowledge he gleaned from his peers while in juvenile detention: “Like I used to talk to a lot of people up in there – all of them, most of them, had juvenile life... They used to always tell me like, ‘man you don’t need to come back’. I used to be like, ‘yeah, I ain’t comin back’. I ain’t been back since like, two years, or a year and a half.’ In this way, traversing into the public fulfills psychosocial needs.

Economics and Self-Policing. To understand the young boys’ language of interaction is to understand the enfleshment of lives at the intersection of place. We can understand their movement as forms of capital. To stay inside is to control a perceived narrative, that going outside will lead to trouble. In some ways this is problematic and relegates the boys to the confines of their homes. Yet, to go outside in the vast exteriority of the streets can be understood as freedom, despite the fact that ‘trouble is everywhere.’ Yet this too is problematic, because freedom leads to captivity. Self-control leads to confinement; freedom also leads to confinement. “Migrating bodies,” Fordham (2010) suggests, “are generally perceived as out of place, watched, and policed, their behaviors and practices under constant surveillance” (pp. 8-9). For the boys who self-police and remain indoors or on the porch, the boys’ economic situation can be said to be discursively functioning at the level of the body as a form of discipline. Disciplines “make possible the meticulous control of the operations of the body...assur[ing] the constant subjection of its forces and imposed upon them a relation of docility-utility” (Foucault, 1979, p. 137). The

control to which Foucault is referring is a more overt form of political. Yet, it can be argued that these young men are objects of social discipline, for there is enclosure (constraints of the neighborhood), there is partitioning (distances one can go that are considered safe), and there are functional sites (places and activities such as sitting on the porch is considered safe). These young men's docile bodies are operating within the discourses that are made possible by their socioeconomic status. The young men function within the possibility of available narratives.

Spatio-Mobility and Socioeconomic Mobility. Youth tended to walk the neighborhoods, suggesting limited mobility. Youth also suggested that summer days would be spent locally in the neighborhood, suggesting a lack of interaction with cultural others that leaving the neighborhood could provide. As minoritized youths' encounters with the public are characterized as "border crossing" and a "triple quandary" (Anzaldua, 1999; Boykin, 1986), it becomes increasingly significant for those youths to have more tools that equip them with the necessary knowledge inherent in stepping between worlds. Additionally, the notion that the inside or the confines of the porch were safe also suggest limited interaction with cultural others who can help youth learn the "biculturality" (Stanton-Salazar, 1997) necessary to function within the larger social structure. That youth have time to participate in activities may be a reflection of their urban socioeconomic status positions. Many of the students live in matriarchal homes, where the mother is listed as sole provider. Conversely, the mother's educational level is often at the high school level. Educational attainment level and salary are strongly correlated. In 2011, the weekly median earnings for people with Bachelor's degrees was \$1,053, compared to \$451-638 earnings made by people holding no high school diploma or a high school diploma. In effect, lower educational attainment can negatively affect the personal parental networks needed to contribute to human development of socially apt children (Cochran, Larner, Riley, Gunnarsson,

Henderson, Jr., 1990). Lest, this narrative be read as one that suggests the parent's be blamed for the children's behavior, it should be noted that two of the participants reported greater parental involvement after incarceration, one suggesting that his mother was unaware of his behavior, the other suggesting his mother was "probably disappointed" by the company he keeps. In personal communication, one mother expressed, "I accept any and all help when it comes to raising my child." Yet, the stresses of life for urban, low socioeconomic status families affects even the best attempts at parenthood (Cochran et al., 1990).

Ethical Question. An African proverb suggests, it takes a village to raise a child. Yet, this proverb is rooted in an ethical notion of communalism which is antithetical to an individualistic, meritocratic, Western world view (Mazama, 2003; Asante, 1987). Fine and Weis (1998) echo the sentiment of the village mentality ethos when they suggest, "We do not need to *fix* these young men and women, but the whole of America (p. 15). Implicit in each of these articulations is turning the gaze onto the systems in which experiences are embedded and away from the individuals. In seeing the problem so clearly, how is it that we still cannot see? Derrida (1978) reminds, "There is no Trojan horse unconquerable by Reason..." (p. 36). In the belly of reason, especially in an American context, the body is only known as property (Fordham, 2010); out of reason's belly, the body can be viewed to scale amongst a vast landscape of possibilities. Toni Morrison's fictive character *Beloved* becomes a discursive site through which we can begin to understand how bodies can be understood through various historical lenses. It becomes possible to conceive of bodies that communicate pain (Smith, 1993). Langevang (2008) found that young men expressed insidedness as pain and outsidedness as a way to relieve "hurting bodies." Might the language of the kids' interactions be understood as types of *Beloveds*, both

products and producers of their environments, restless and hungry for interaction to be known by social others (Schapiro, 1991)?

Circling the Subject

Several months after attending the summer dropout prevention program, it was brought to my attention that one of my participants had ended up in juvenile detention. I asked his mother for permission to attend the upcoming hearing. On the day of the hearing, when it was my participant's turn, the family and I left out of the main courtroom which was full of minoritized families accompanied by multiple adolescents, and we walked into a small room. In the room one long rectangular table stretched to either side, every seat at the table was taken, so much so people sat in either of the four corners of the room. The judge sat at the head of the rectangular table, accompanied by a transcriptionist, psychologist, a case worker, attorney, a parole officer, my participant, and a host of attendants whom roles I was not sure. The apparatus of the state was quite impressive and fluid in its movements. I took it in, in curious amazement, until the judge looked at me and asked my name and my affiliation. I explained I was a researcher (with whom?) LSU, researching a dropout prevention program and "at risk" youth. To which the judge asked, "And you'll make sure your participant receives his treatment plan?" To which I replied "yes." After the hearing I was solicited by several parties at the table wanting to know more about the program. Two people were eagerly scribbling my contact information and promised to be in touch. The psychologist slipped me his business card and told me "don't hesitate to call."

I left the courtroom that day amazed by the seemingly maddening process. In a room comprised of 20 + ambassadors of the state, not one person recommended any services that might serve as an intervention for that youth. Instead they, who had no idea of whom I was prior

to my entrance, turned to me an outsider for a solution. I'd asked my participant's parole officer if there were any programs for the youth in the area, as they clearly had a penal and judicial system ready to discipline the minoritized youth I'd seen enter the room in handcuffs and chain gain. She'd said there were no services in the area for those youth. The busy apparatus of the state with its ready and willing school to prison pipeline was present. But there were no community services for the adolescents in the area. It becomes important to replace one structure with another. Yet, there was no community service structure to replace the penal and judicial structures which awaited these kids with open arms. Just silence.

"In America, we like to be spoon-fed our madness, not too much at once, and we don't want the lights too bright. We want the madness in a neat package. We need to be able to press a button and lower its volume, or punch another and remove it from view instantly. Don't serve it to us in its natural container, bulging chaos, incongruity and violence from every seam. We need it neat." (Stephen Cole in Robinson, 2007, pg. 49).

Conclusion

In section two, I engaged student narratives about the everyday practices that mitigated their engagement of place. Narratives revealed youth engaged in specific strategies as they engaged places. While the engagement of specific strategies indicated agency, it also revealed participant awareness of the multiple discourses that mitigate how they discuss and participate in place. Places functioned as sites of knowledge production, spatio-geographies had specific meanings and discursive practices. Youth narratives were characterized by perceived material and intellectual lack, these two ultimately culminating in communalism or thrill seeking behavior in normative or deviant behavior as the adolescents traversed public and private. I concluded with a narrative that implicates community partners in the provision of local services in which working class adolescent male youth can engage. This recommendation comes with understanding the necessity of replacing structures which characterize lack, like youth

enrollment in summer camps, not simply short-term incarceration patterns which temporarily delay the symptoms of lack but do not treat the cause.

III. Networks: Fictive Kinships & “Brother’s keeper”

In this section I explore the interaction of youth within the confines of the LSYOU dorms. One emergent theme had implications for the continuing case of understanding youths’ language of interaction in different spatial geographies.

Within the constraints of the LSYOU environment a group dynamic became evident; a particular group of students created a new identity, a collective one that they referred to as “brother’s keepers.” What was the significance of the name, what did it mean to be a part of ‘brother’s keepers,’ and how did it function? The term functioned like an organizer of social experience. It encompassed notions of place (difference/sameness equates to getting along/not getting along?), notions of equality and expressions of friendship. It reminded me of Fordham’s (1996) definition of a fictive kinship. She explains,

[A] fictive kinship system is African-Americans’ premier prestige system in their imagined nation-state, conveying the idea of brotherhood and sisterhood of *all* African-Americans, regardless of class, gender, or sexual orientation. A sense of peoplehood or collective social identity exists within the group. This collective, appropriate(d) identity is evident in the various kinship terms that Black Americans use to refer to one another, such as “brother,” “sister,” and “blood” (p. 72).

Fordham explains at length the function of fictive kinships. Fictive kinships are a way of seeing the world and embodies moral judgment of its group members. Group members needn’t be racially homogenous, but rather share the behaviors, attitudes, and activities of the group. Fictive kinships are characterized by an egalitarian ethos that is subversive to Western individualism (Hill Collins, 1990). The fictive kinship system blurs and sutures the polarization of hierarchy

and egalitarianism through hybridization. Fordham's analysis profoundly implies, though never stated explicitly that a fictive kinship, collaborative worldview is the quintessential *ethical* answer to the perennial question of what it means to be human. Fictive kinship is a discursive practice that emerged as a result of African-Americans historical relationship to the dominant power structure, thus it is a political form of engagement steeped in resistance.

Collectivism. Interestingly enough, Fordham's claim that fictive kinships emerge as discursive responses to people's location to the dominant structure is echoed in the first student's response. In this case, the dominant structure is the context of the dropout prevention program, in which the students are subordinates. About his feelings of the program one student says, "Like I like it, but then I don't like some of the ways that they have... You gotta learn sometimes some people got to take one for the team. And we are our brother's keepers right?" The notion of "our brother's keepers" emerges in the idea of the individual sacrificing for the collective.

Collectivism is a common theme in the literature of African Americans for both males and females (Hill Collins, 1990; Fine & Weis, 1998). What follows is a section from the interview that emerged in response to the question: What are your feelings toward LSYOU?

Student: The way I feel about LSYOU is, I really, I really like it, but I don't really know what to say about it. Like I like it, but then I don't like some of the ways that they have... You gotta learn sometimes some people got to take one for the team. And we are our brother's keepers right?

All: Right

Me: Where'd that come from? We are our brothers' keepers?

Student: [a popular culture film] New Jack City

Student: "Hit it one time for her." Am I my brother's keeper?

All reply: Yes I am.

All reply: We are our brother's keepers.

Me: So that's a self-made concept?

All: Yeah

Student: We, we look out for each other.

Student: I mean we have our ups and downs sometimes.

Student: Yeah we have our ups and downs but we know when there's time, a time and a place for everything. And like, when we're in a learning environment, it's a time for learning. But when we're in a playing and partyin' environment, we know how to play and we know what extent to take it to.

Their collectivism then, is rooted in the context of their social location relative to the dominant societal structure, a notion of reciprocity – “we look out for each other,” and an understanding of a locus of control – “a time and a place for everything.”

Difference/Egalitarianism. The brother's keeper title was also subsumed under another name, “The Louise Garig Fam[ily]” which was comprised of the name of the dorm room in which the young men stayed. Again Fordham (1996) notes that inclusion into fictive kinship relationships is often noted by familial rhetoric such as brother, sister, or blood, which are all subsumed under the relational signifier of the family. Fordham (2010) also reminds us that kinship is not biological but social denoting recognition, relatedness, and reciprocity.

Surprisingly each of these things, recognition, relatedness, and reciprocity were evident in the articulation of brother's keepers. Recognition occurs when one person states, “Hit it one time for her.” Am I my brother's keeper?” Here, the boys had the opportunity to be interpellated as subjects into the brother's keeper identity, where they are both performing culture and performing identity (Dmitriadis, 2009). As another boy stated, to be a brother's keeper suggests “We look out for each other,” suggesting that reciprocity in their relationships. And yet, this relatedness exists in spite of difference: “I mean we have our ups and downs sometimes.” To which another student replies: Yeah we have our ups and downs but we know when there's time, a time and a place for everything...” He goes on to say:

Yeah and we learn towe learn that, we might be from different parts of this earth, and we may be from different parts of the earth, of the United States,

Student: Earth?!

Student: Yeah, but you from Alexandria right?

Student: Yeah.

Student: I'm from Springfield.

Student: I'm from Morgan.

Student: He from across that water.

Student: We say things differently but sometimes we mean the same thing. And, the way, you might not like a person, but here, you gonna learn to respect that person.

All: Yeah.

Student: You ain't gotta like it but you gotta respect it.

Student: 'Cause it takes it to get it.

There was an affinity of the boys to their cities (to spatio-geographic place), yet there was an understanding that "we say things differently but sometimes we mean the same thing."

Interestingly, respect seemed to be at the heart of their relationships, suggesting also a perspective of ethics: "ethics is also not something that gets integrated into...culture, but lies at the heart of establishing and envisioning a culture to begin with" (Preiser & Cilliers, 2010, p. 268). While difference was recognized and articulated, it did not result in othering. Difference was not a precursor for alienation but rather an opening for interaction and familiarity. It was interesting the way in which the young boys interpreted difference and sameness in their journals. In response to a journal prompt: Meeting new people can be exciting. What have you learned anything new from different people you have met? *Difference* seemed to be mediated through an understanding of self and other:

"...everybody you meet is different. They all have different personalities. But the more new people you meet the more exciting things get. I learned new things from every person."

“...everyone have experienced different things. Some people practiced different activities that others don’t know about.”

“I’ve learned new things such as where people live and where they are from.”

“I learned we all are alike in some ways no matter where you came from.”

Popular Culture as Pedagogy. Another facet of how the boys constructed community within the space of the program, was the way popular culture mediated their social experience and influenced their identities in the space of the program (Dimitriadis, 2009). As one of the young men said, the “brother’s keeper” label draws from the popular culture film, *New Jack City*, an African American take on mob culture, though others might suggest the film is rooted in a resentment discourse (McCarthy et. al, 1997) in that it perpetuates negative images of African Americans in the media. The particular movie scene in which the discourse of ‘brother’s keeper’ emerges shows mob lord Nino (actor Wesley Snipes), sitting at the head of a table, flanked on either side by his mob family (both real and fictive). He is making a toast and celebrating hard work, entrepreneurialism, “the new American dream”, a toast to his family “in life till death.” After his toast he engages the members at the table in a call and response pattern : (Nino: Am I my brother’s keeper?) (All: Yes, I am.); (Nino louder: Am I my brother’s keeper?) (All more emphatic: Yes, I am!); (Nino crescendo: Am I my brother’s keeper?) (All very emphatic: Yes, I am!). This call and response method was the way these young men performed the brother’s keeper identity for me. The sociocultural and linguistic implications of call and response patterns are documented in the literature. Mercer (2010) suggests that “language is the prime cultural tool” that enables “development of relationships” amongst superiors and subordinates (p. 10). Additionally call and response discourses traverse the private home lives of students and mediates public spaces, which lend themselves to “community and affirmation” in public spaces, which can in turn positively affect motivation in educative contexts (Boone, 2003, p. 224).

Indeed the youths' "reasoning about everyday texts" assists in making "connections between prior knowledge and new targets of learning" (Lee, 2006, p. 319), again a mediating function between private and public. In this way it becomes possible to understand that the boys navigated their new environment by constructing identities which drew upon knowledge from their lives outside of the program. This suggests that the brother's keeper identity functioned as a discursive space in which the private and the public could be merged. Dimitriadis (2009) suggests that "understanding...how people navigate their way between the various and often highly disjunctive influences operating in their lives, is crucial if educators are to forge more locally relevant policies, institutions, and curricula for often intensely marginalized people" (p. 95). The construction of identities functioned as the result of a particular discursive practice within a particular place (De Certeau, 1984).

Summary

In this section I discovered the youths' affinity to language as a means of naming and informing socially constructed relationships. Naming seemed to suggest, inclusion, a corporate identity, a separate localized identity coexisting with the home space identities which emerged in reference to difference. Belongingness to place as evidenced through identity performance may suggest social coping mechanisms that mitigate experience from private to public. Yet, "fictive kinship" as a label has specific implications for understanding a language of interaction at the intersections of private and public. Why "family" and "brother's keepers" as descriptors? Chatters, Taylor, & Jayakody (1994) suggest that: "extending kinship status to friend relationships is a means to expand one's social network" (p. 297). The nature of kinship, rights and privileges then inform fictive kinship relationships, such as inclusion and protection.

As a consequence, friendships which are regarded in kinship terms undergo an intensification of the bonds of mutual obligation in what normally would be a relatively informal and causal relationship. With the designation of fictive kin status, comes both

respect and responsibility and fictive kin are expected to participate in the duties of the extended family (Chatters, Taylor, & Jayakody, 1994, p. 297).

Perhaps, we can begin to understand fictive kinship constructions as a specific type of network accumulation that mediates the transition from private to public spaces for these youth. I will consider this idea more in the discursive analysis of family I conduct in Chapter 5. Having discussed how fictive kinship relationships function in a peer-to-peer relationship, in the next section I consider how fictive kinships function in superior-subordinate relationships as they exist between the students and program advisors.

IV. (Dis)Embodied Intersubjectivities: Relationships with Institutional Gatekeepers

Voices Within the Veil

I cannot obtain any truth whatsoever about myself, except through the mediation of another. The other is indispensable to my existence, and equally so to any knowledge I can have of myself. Under these conditions, the intimate discovery of myself is at the same time the revelation of the other as a freedom which confronts mine, and which cannot think or will without doing so either for or against me. Thus, at once, we find ourselves in a world which is, let us say, that of “inter-subjectivity.” It is in this world that man has to decide what he is and what others are. Sartre, 1946, p. 361

It matters how we call those we teach (Biesta, 2010). Fanon (2008) suggests “that to speak is to exist absolutely for the other” (p. 1), yet above all, to speak means “assuming a culture” (p. 2). To assume speech then is to assume commonality. It is an “anxiety about language – which can only be an anxiety of language, within language itself” (Derrida, 1978, p. 3). Yet Morrison (1987) says, in order for experience to be familiar, “language must get out of the way” (p. xix). When she pens, “this is not a story to pass on” (p. 324), she is suggesting there is no language outside of the language of experience. In order to understand experience within historical contexts, we need first to untangle the networks of power and privilege, existing through the “anxiety of language” which often mitigate experience for marginalized populations. If people realize their humanity through the word, that is, through reflection and action (Freire,

2009), how do we better understand the language of experience which lends itself to the spoken word?

I turn to the song because it existed as a language of experience, whereby the only people who could *fully* participate were those who, fully privy to the understanding of lyric and melody existed in the same discursive condition. Therefore to understand the ‘naturally veiled and half articulate’ nature of the song, is to be fully present in the experiential project. The requirements for inclusion of the song’s meaning, much like understanding fictive kinships, are egalitarian, simply supposing that one affirms another’s humanity. For Du Bois (2012), the song is “the most beautiful expression of human experience born” (p. 213). A song is a “message [that] is naturally veiled and half articulate...[where] words and music have lost each other...” (p. 217). A “strange blending of love and helplessness sighs through the refrain” (p. 219). “The things evidently borrowed from the surrounding world undergo characteristic change (p. 220).” “There breathes a hope – a faith in the ultimate justice of things” (p. 221). “The songs are indeed the siftings of centuries; the music is far more ancient than the words...Two hundred years it has travelled down to us and we sing it to our children, knowing as little as our fathers what its words may mean, but knowing well the meaning of its music” (pp. 215-216). If you know “little” of the word’s meaning, but know “well the meaning of the music,” you are fully present in the experiential project. You understand well, the language of experience.

My hope is to evoke “what cannot be known discursively or performed perfectly, though all know it as if discursively and perform it as perfectly” (Tyler, 1986, p. 123). I present a song of experience – polyphonic adult and adolescent voices representative of the past, the present, and possibilities of the future.

A Song

‘I wish that I could keep them sometimes...
I get protective...I know this is where God wants me to be.’

Aw, it's like family. Like everyone really cares for each other you know. We are like an extended family, Everybody looked out for each other, and things like that you know we are the extra source that helps the kids get through If someone needed help with something, they'd help you. because sometimes in the course of a year the counselor may not see every student every senior, sophomore or junior – they may not get the chance to have that relationship with them and our program is very relationship driven. LSYOU is just like, it's like a family, you know. They take care of you. Whenever you need help with something, they'll provide for you. No matter, you know...

Well, they u know, we actually talked about, sometimes we'd actually talk about personal things, and sometimes we won't. We talk about teen abstinence. We also talk about current events, just whatever is on the minds of students. You know they'll tell me things like, things like what to do and what not to do, and like you know it was kind of like a family. And I really kinda like that What problems their having at school at home or on the news just whatever issues that come up that they want to talk about or that they deem important; we do that. So they were telling us we gotta start taking life serious, you know, and we used to play a lot and stuff but you know the program really did like change all of us because half of us – the majority of us are now graduating and getting ready for college and stuff. When I started the class we pretty much were talking about teen abstinence but I found out that things were happening like murders were happening in their neighborhoods, they wanted to talk about their futures – what was going on in the world so we kinda curtail that to whatever the kids' interests are. They be sayin' some real stuff that you need to learn, you know. Teach us some stuff.

And she, you know, she really care about us. They know we care about them and we want to help them. She looks out for us. We are a support system for 'em because nobody else may be pushing them to get out of high school. She's a beautiful woman, she's like a second mother to me. She always makes sure that I have everything done. Even though it can be in a short span of

time, she's always calling me to remind me about this. She makes sure I get my work done. She makes sure that I'm okay, so. It's like she's my second mother. She's a very very beautiful woman. We're the only people who might be telling them it's possible to go to college. She tell it like it is. They'll tell us they didn't think they could go because no one in their family went to college and I'll say to them that doesn't mean that you can't go. To be honest, they just keep it real with you how they feel.

I like both of em.

Yeah she say what's on her mind.

She ain't gon' hold back.

They cool to me. Cause like when, I'm in trouble, they always get me out of trouble. We have a relationship with the kids where they can call us when they have a problem, if something is not going right at school they can say, "Well I'm gonna call Mrs. [Advisor] maybe she can talk to my teacher or maybe she can go to a hearing for me, they know that we'll be here to go to bat for them and make sure they receive fair treatment or what have you. I really like her. Because I messed up and it wasn't a major offense that I did. So she just gave me a warning and just told me not to do it again. Like that's something I really like. Because there are times when you [sup]posed to be hard on a child, but then there are times when you can just let things go by.

Schools don't have time to find out exactly what problem is [concerning the reasons why some kids don't finish high school] they just want to make sure the students are in their desks doing work and that's it. ...*like when she came to my school, my mama was havin' a hard time with me, like everybody was having a hard time with me, [my advisor] was like right there. She'd come down there every day and she would check on me. And like she was there through the whole process and anything I need if I call her, she gonna, you know, work on trying to get it, like she just, there.* They have no idea what that kid may have had to go through to get to school in the morning. Lots of barriers to studying the kid may not have had lights and so we're the resource to connect them with sources in the general they need to get ahead. Can't do homework without lights or a computer. *When I didn't have school supplies she bought 'em for me...* The child cannot learn when they are hungry. *...anytime I was hungry she fed me.* It's a whole lot o' things that we find out about the kids that we assist them with to get them back on track. We don't just help the kids we help the whole family if they allow us to do that. *She, she, she's like a*

grandma to me. Like, cuz, at first like, I wasn't even gonna come to this program. She came to my house and talked to me. And told me uh... all types of stuff like I could do better and all that. And they'll only allow us to help if we have the relationship with them. They like my grandmothers... that's who I can always talk to no matter what And they confide in us a lot. ... Whenever I need somebody to talk to. Always talk to them.

We talk about career choices to go on after high school. *So she's been there, they've been there, every step of the way... For the summer they came and made sure we applied for jobs. Talk about what they need to know to succeed – to get ahead in high school. They did a lot. They actually went the extra step, when other people wouldn't. Some kids are not in the right classes. She's so cool and sweet. She helped me with everything. And it's been that way since the 8th grade and we always kept in touch since then, since I was in 8th grade. And I'm about to graduate now. I scrutinize their transcripts to make sure each kid knows what they need to do because the guidance counselors are doing so many other things they don't really have the time to scrutinize their schedule and make sure the kids are in the right classes. I love her. I really do. When students don't have the tools they need to succeed, the school is failing them to start with.*

As they get closer to graduation they realize goal as obtainable and they want to get everything they can get. They see us as a support system. They know they can come to us and we will help them. They know we care about them. Any student in school is there because they want to be there. They come up to us now. They know we have those transcripts and we carry them in our hands like a bible. They run to us, and they want us to see their grades. They are focused.

[I like her] Because she always checkin on me and she don't yell at everything.

I like [her] because she check in on me.

I like both of 'em because both of 'em always check up on me.
Right. And they give me lovin' and a hug!

...there is nevertheless a human universality of condition...[our] historical situations are variable...but what never vary are the necessities of being in the world...

Sartre, 1946, p. 362

V. Implications of Understanding Unruly bodies,” “Fictive Kinships,” and “Veiled Voices”

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first section: Creating Knowable Bodies, I hoped the intersectionality of language as experience would produce a synergistic framework that allows for thinking at the limits and enabling a conceptualization of experience that is not static, but rather dynamic. The second section: Disciplining Unruly Bodies considered the students' home lives and the knowledge which forms their stories to live by. In section three: Fictive Kinships, I considered student interaction in the boundaries of the summer program. In section four: Relationship with Institutional Gatekeepers, I use a polyphonic approach to consider the voices in the program. The resulting effect makes the reader an eavesdropper into a private conversation, in which the meaning is known only by the speakers, and the reader/listener must strain to determine what the melody is suggesting. It is a song that must be attended to closely and respectfully, so as not to interrupt. Through the span of the previous sections, I have tried not to be blind to everyday obvious-ness, as I orchestrate an understanding of discourses that flow and ebb in and out of public and private spaces, in and out of theory, and in and out form, through the narratives of participants.

Through an ecological development model, we understand the embeddedness of adolescents in multiple contexts. Yet, research continues to unravel how adolescents' interactions with their environments inhibit or support their mobility into the public sphere. Cochran (1990) suggests that understanding personal networks can serve as the bridge between macrolevel structures such as ideologies and social institutions and the smaller-scale intimacy of family life. Personal network interactions can have potential outcomes for human development. For instance, the processes of unconditional support commitment can lead to basic trust and

security. Social exchanges can lead to networking skills. Exposure to human differences can lead to tolerance, respect for differences, and openness to others. Feedback and social reflection of self can lead to self-appraisal. Information gathering can lead to informed decisions regarding friendships, sexual activity, education, employment, etc (Cochran, 1990). It becomes necessary to identify networking patterns as they exist in the private sphere, to understand new network interaction availability, and the resultant patterns emerging in the public sphere.

The implication of understanding the patterns emergent in the students' lives at the intersectionality of personal network acquisition is that many status indicators (single parent family background, race, neighborhood, etc.) have implications for network acquisition. For these students, many of whom came from single-parent homes, most described friends as their support groups. Their closest friends tended to be the ones with whom they participated in like activities. For the young men from single-parent homes, they tended to describe support groups in terms of actual kinships such as older uncles and cousins. A look into their mobility patterns suggested boundedness within the local neighborhood context. Information either emerged in terms of neighbors or institutional gatekeepers such as school counselors, family and extended family members such as uncles. In some cases, students had siblings who had participated in the program. "Fictive kinships" and "brother's keepers" emerged in exposure to human differences in the context of a new social structure. This language as discourse practice may owe itself to the close bonds that exist between the males and their typically older male relatives who serve as friends, and also socializing agents. For both male and female voices within the veil, the language as discourse practice may reflect the overwhelming matriarchal relationships that exist within their fatherless homes.

At the intersection of relationships with institutional gatekeepers, I ask you to hold in your mind notions of fictive kinships, brother's keepers, familial descriptors of relationships with institutional gatekeepers. I also ask that you hold in your mind the discourses that inform the private lives of these participants and the larger social narratives in which their stories are embedded. It is at the intersectionality of private and public analytic grids that languages of interaction emerge in fullness.

What do the voices within the veil tell us? How do we make sense of their seemingly easy intertwining, while not misunderstanding their discursive implications? Should we take their call and response as self-evident, or should we be suspicious? I suggest the answer lies in understanding the intersectionality of an experience of place, enfleshed bodies, and a rethinking of public. The voices in the veil easily intertwine, because the alternative structure of the program has constructed a "public" space that does not conflict with the students' private selves. Because of the congruence between students' enfleshed bodies, that is, their experiential knowledge, combined with the way they experience the program as place (and with it, its norms as exhibited through program advisors, dialogue, and structural principles of care, concern, and dialogue), a polyphonic song is easily construed.

When we take their narrative off paper, put bodies in the context of historical place we can better understand their song as a specific discursive formation of a particular alternative organization program context, which is already functioning as a margin within the center of educational discourse. The song then becomes peculiar, an understandable "other." Yet, their song gives me hope. In order to better understand those voices discursively, in the next chapter I shift backwards in time to bring you back into the historical present.

CHAPTER 5: FAMILY AS LANGUAGE, DISCOURSE, & PRACTICE

In this section I map a sociocultural geography of “at risk” through the identification of four discourses: eugenics, the language of culture (“culturally disadvantaged” and “at risk”), achievement gap, and school culture and “minority” experience. Having mapped out a topography of “at risk” terrain in which to situate my analysis, I then identify two main themes from LSYOU: theoretical underpinning, and relationality (along with its three subthemes: long-term case management, funding, relational surety). Subthemes are concluded with individual analyses. The chapter concludes with a discussion section exploring implications.

A Sociocultural Geography of “At Risk”

How does “at risk” as a signifier function as a discursive construct within LSYOU’s theoretical framework? To understand how “at risk” negotiation is made possible through this theoretical framework is best understood firstly through a brief “sociocultural geography” (De Certeau, 1988, p. 133) – a geographical mapping of social and cultural ideas which suggests that a consideration of traces of historical events can provide understanding of the relationship between ideology and social practice as dialogical constants, always informing each other. In a poststructuralist understanding of language, “meaning results from the differences between all the signs in a system (Cilliers, 2010, p. 3). Using Saussure’s theory of language, Cilliers (2010) explains the relationality of identity: “The signifier “brown” does not have a meaning because it can be identified with a concept that unambiguously contains the essence of “brownness”, but because it can be differentiated from the signifiers “black”, “blue”, “grey”...etc. (p. 6). He explains the sign is determined through its difference from others in the system. The sign exists in a network of relationships where the sign is the result of interacting relationships.

Therefore, to avoid easy essentialisms inherent in interpreting discourse I use a deconstructive technique in my understanding of “at risk” as a language of experience to move away from essentialist representations of experience which allow for certain forms of speech and simultaneously codify certain silences. Thus, I must understand the relationship between signifier and signified as “persistent critique” (Spivak, 1991, p. 61). Jackson and Mazzei (2012) explain, “deconstruction looks for what is concealed, repressed, or pushed away within the maneuvering processes of the center” (p. 38). This analysis exists within a center that is, examining the narrative of a dropout prevention program, an explicit always-already discursive formation of an educational apparatus within larger educational discourse. Thus, understanding that a dropout prevention program is already speaking if you will as a marginalized entity within larger educational discourse I can consider notions of “at risk” as a sign, the result of interacting relationships of educational discourse. The project then becomes one of consideration of the relationship between centers and margins, signifiers and signified, of how the center functions to produce knowledge of what it means to be on the margins.

I suggest through traversing these sociocultural geographies that four centering strategies of delineating “at risk” discourse are 1) Eugenics, 2) The Language of Culture, 3) Academic Achievement Gap, and 4) School Culture and “Minority” Experience. I suggest that as strategies these discourses reflect ideological and cultural practices through which experiences of “at risk” in educational discourses are manifest. Foucault (1980) suggests, “It’s not a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power, but of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic, and cultural, within which it operates at the present time” (p. 133).

Eugenics

Private interests have long influenced public practice as is the case of educational theorists like Franklin Bobbit, Leta Stetter Hollingsworth, and Michael Guyer – all pioneers in early American curriculum development and all self-identified eugenicists (Selden, 1987). Winnfield (2007) notes early American curriculum theory and practice was informed by the wide-spread social espousing of eugenic ideology – a belief in social betterment through hereditary preservation. Yet, race and class inferiority were the underscoring logic in certain eugenics movements as evidenced by the justification of racial inferiority through I.Q. testing (Hartlage, Lucas, & Godwin, 1976), furthering the sentiment that learning capacity is inherited thus conflating discourses of racism with notions of poverty and academic achievement. The implication for the educational system should be clear: eugenics resulted in social legitimization of racial and class-based sentimentality functioning covertly as the “truth” of the language of research.

Eugenicist ideology and the social practice of federally-mandated integration provide an interesting grid of the intersectionality of ideologically racial currents persisting in practice in the American public school system, and allows for the identification of the manifestation of other discourses resulting from these major social discourses. The persistent socially motivated undercurrent of *difference*, biological and thus inferior, manifested itself through specific educational practices situated in the political economy of school performance. Performance was based upon the logic of testing, which was underscored by social Darwinism ideas of social efficiency and sorting (Winnfield, 2007). Once “minority” students were integrated into the public school system, they found themselves to be the continuous objects of educational discourse, due to their “maladjustment” into the new system. African American students were

disproportionately funneled through a special education pipeline resulting in an overrepresentation (Jordan, 2005). As recently as 2006,

Black students represented 17.13% of public school students, yet 32.01% were identified as having an intellectual disability (formerly termed *mental retardation*), 28.91% as being emotionally disturbed, 20.23% as having a specific LD, and 21.66% as being developmentally delayed. The greatest overrepresentation in each category was Black males (Ford, 2012, p. 398).

Perhaps an early incentive to this particular form of pipelining students through a discourse of “disability” were the financial incentives states received. For instance, in 1977, New York labeled 19% of their students as “learning disabled,” while Hawaii labeled 63% of their students disabled, while in the early 1970’s a Pennsylvania district classified 36% of its students as handicapped and therefore eligible for aid (NYSED, 2009, pp. 38-39). The “unreliability of diagnoses” was due to differing criteria, and state funding, among other things. Or, perhaps the high rates at which minoritized populations were funneled into special education courses, were indicative of something more insidious. Time continued to show that the trace of the other was constantly present in the hole that needed to be filled, to be occupied, by the place that American segregation had left empty. The idea of classifying, sorting, and labeling seemed to be a natural outlet of the classification, sorting, and labeling patterns that had accompanied the previous social period of American slavery.

The Language of Culture

While the discourse of biology was one facet surrounding at risk experience, the discourse of culture emerged as well. Eugenics politics and segregationist ideology continued to operate in the apparatus of educational research’s aim to understand the cultural other, whose existence had been explained decades earlier as a social “problem,” (Anderson, 1988) through which the sustained narrative that African Americans were inherently *deficient* as a culture,

promoted the social fiction of the deficit model. An attempt to explain African American children's maladjustment into the public school system was explained through a discourse of culture, where culture became a codified value-judgment for "different." School performance was explained through the "burden of acting white" (Ogbu, 2004). African American kids' language was picked apart, dissected, and put back together again, only to reveal that while it was indeed different, it was legitimately underscored by rationale and logic (Heath, 1982; Heath, 1984; Patterson, 2009; Riessman, 2008).

The ability to name continues to be the intellectual type of "property" of the West (Fordham, 2010) that has replaced the practice of physical property/ownership through a substitution of bodies as capital *to* racial privilege as capital, evidenced by discursive educational practices and through material legal practices. Harris (1993) explains the relationship between ideology and practice:

In particular, whiteness and property share a common premise - a conceptual nucleus - of a right to exclude. This conceptual nucleus has proven to be a powerful center around which whiteness as property has taken shape. Following the period of slavery and conquest, white identity became the basis of racialized privilege that was ratified and legitimated in law as a type of status property. After legalized segregation was overturned, whiteness as property evolved into a more modern form through the law's ratification of the settled expectations of relative white privilege as a legitimate and natural baseline (p. 1714).

Race is the modern-day property of the West (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), a construct that feeds a spurious ideological machine of naming, organizing, and sorting experience in material spaces. This preoccupation with naming, and thereby controlling the limits of discourse on the other is evident in the cases of the labels "culturally deprived/disadvantaged" and "at risk." The implications of ideology and material practices informing each other, apply here as well.

Culturally Deprived/Disadvantaged. The culturally deprived discourse emerged within the rhetoric against the war on poverty (Glatt, 1965; Placier, 1996). Previous terms "bottom

track” and “wagon group” were “administratively contrived panaceas for culturally deprived children” (Barksdale, 1970, p. 52). Culturally deprived initially sought to deflect biological explanations for children’s failures owing to the eugenics movement but soon became immersed in a discourse universe of: “culturally deprived, educationally deprived, deprived, lower class, underprivileged, disadvantaged, and lower socioeconomic group” (Glatt, 1965, p. 407) with the publication of Riessman’s (1962) book *The Culturally Deprived Child*. Culturally deprived emerged as a critique against “effects of social class subcultures, as opposed to genetic inheritance, on student achievement,” (Placier, 1996, p 246) thus becoming an indicator of social class which had always been strongly associated with race. Taba (1965) suggests the term culturally deprived was only “a variation on a theme” (p. 147), due to inclusion indicators which echoed eugenics discourse on social inferiority: low I.Q., achievement, grades, poor health, fatherless, come from rural backgrounds and large families (Barksdale, 1970; Taba, 1965). One article in the *Journal of Negro Education* critiqued the deficit view of disadvantaged terminology, questioning “disadvantaged for what” (Havighurst, 1964, p. 211)? That ideology was conflated with practice is evident as Heath (1984) explains, “The same findings which had been attached to studies of children of different social classes were now attached to research on ethnically and linguistically different children and families” (pp. 256-257). But ultimately the confusion over terminology about populations of whom are most likely African American, and lower SES children have been at the root of the issue, leading Heath (1984) to suggest we must “explicate the power of language and how the language is used as power” (p. 269). While, even in research’s best attempts to be culturally sensitive, the discourse from which culturally deprived had its origins is one of othering, with “culturally deprived children” often compared

or labeled under the same umbrella to another group persons with mental disabilities (Barksdale, 1970; Kavale, 1988; Erevelles, 2000).

“At Risk” Discourse. The trace of the other had manifested itself too in at risk discourse, with the arrival of the National Commission on Excellence in Education’s (NCEE) (1984) report, *A Nation at Risk*. The report was characterized by the potentiality of America losing its industrial supremacy in an expanding global economy, present in *A Nation at Risk* were traces of a similar theme. One passage states:

That we have compromised this commitment is, upon reflection, hardly surprising, given the multitude of often conflicting demands we have placed on our Nation’s schools and colleges. They are routinely called on to provide solutions to personal, social, and political problems that the home and other institutions either will not or cannot resolve. We must understand that these demands on our schools and colleges often exact an educational cost as well as a financial one. (NCEE, 1984, p. 6)

Another passage states:

Part of what is at risk is the promise first made on this continent: All, regardless of race or class or economic status, are entitled to a fair chance and to the tools for developing their individual powers of mind and spirit to the utmost. This promise means that all children by virtue of their own efforts, competently guided, can hope to attain the mature and informed judgment needed to secure gainful employment, and to manage their own lives, thereby serving not only their own interests but also the progress of society itself. (NCEE, 1984, p. 8)

Though understood within the dictates of reform rhetoric, one thing becomes evident: the child’s success is independent of the state. Strains of positivist rationality are evident in these two passages. To deny that children’s material realities impair their chances for academic success is to deny the institutionalization of inequity by positioning the state in a position of neutrality, thus denying the material reality of certain American “minority” populations. This logic is commonly identified as the myth of meritocracy which extends the idea that achievement can be obtained by one’s merit and its premise is predicated by the idea that the materiality of class, race, gender,

and ability have no bearings in social achievement (Liu, 2011; Stuntz, 2008; Rowan-Kenyon, Perna, & Swan, 2011; Bell, Rowan-Kenyon, & Perna, 2009; Perna, Rowan-Kenyon, Bell, Thomas, & Li, 2008; Milner, 2012).

That ideas of meritocracy find themselves embedded in national documents in the discourse of public education is as an effect of power, the results of which endows it with the ability to name and define the margins, the “irreducible limit” due to its ability to write the narrative on the Other, and in doing so, construct the options, the organizing principles, the rules of discourse through which the identity of the Other emerges.

Academic Achievement Gap

Throughout this time an academic achievement gap had become quite substantial in educational discourse. Prior to the 1970’s federal funding in the outpouring of Title 1 programs had been the means by which the government addressed issues of equity, “attempting to redress the inequities in education that resulted from socioeconomic disadvantage, discrimination, and language background” (NYSED, 2009, p. 82). Ultimately, it would be shown, that poor and urban children’s academic achievement was more strongly correlated to socioeconomic status, than either compensatory programs within the schools or integration attempts, but rather the strongest predictor of academic achievement was parental socioeconomic status (NYSED, 2009). In the seventies, as more amendments passed, increasing the allotment of financial aid, compensatory programs flourished, including “dropout prevention projects, school health services, gifted children’s programs, women’s equity programs, career education, arts education...ethnic heritage centers, federal programs for migratory, delinquent, and Native American pupils, and dozens of other programs” (NYSED, 2009, p. 28). In so doing, the federal government’s “social contract” with the American public school system and her poor, urban

youth, was explicitly acknowledging two things, 1) the public school system could not meet the changing demographics needs (which indirectly suggests incongruency with poor urban, minority populations) and 2) “that carefully targeted compensatory programs were essential to equal opportunities in the nation’s schools” (NYSED, 2009, p. 28). Another important milestone¹² in educational reform history was the federal decision recognizing “education” outside of constitutional rights and therefore, deferring to the states the “burden” of covering educational costs. What were the implications of state school aid spending mandates?

It effectively took the issue of school funding out of the realm of federal responsibility and removed the issue of educational quality – or resources – from the context of federally protected “rights.” At the same time, however, it left states with the burden of covering the high cost of educational services mandated under other federal laws...including the costs of bilingual and the costs of court-ordered desegregation. In these areas, the federal government required educational services but took no responsibility paying for them. NYSED, 2009, p. 33)

By the time *A Nation at Risk* emerged highlighting poor achievement rates and the need for standardized tests, “educational opportunities would be measured not so much in terms of financial aid, special programs, or even racial desegregation but, rather, in terms of standardized tests” (NYSED, 2009, p. 49). Funding was predicated more stringently on measurable achievement outcomes, leading scholars to conclude that “results on outcomes such as standardized tests provide information about a particular, socially constructed way of thinking about what students know and need to know” (Milner, 2012, p. 694). Though the discourse had again changed, the longstanding traditional ideologies of social Darwinism and eugenic sentiment with its emphasis on testing, sorting, and classifying, and its inverse relationship with urban, minoritized populations lagging in academic achievement remained the same.

¹² See *Antonio v. Rodriguez* 411 U.S. 1 (1973) and *San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez*, 411 U.S. 1(21 March 1973). The case revolved around “local disparities in school aid and differences in tax effort.” The ruling suggested that a state’s “formula for state aid to schools did not jeopardize the key principle of “equal

Traditional School Culture

Historically, funding and compensatory programming had explicitly strengthened the position that the effects of poverty dogged at risk students' acculturation into the public schools, thus the necessity of federal intervention in the form of compensatory programs and funding which was expected to equalize achievement scores. The achievement gap continues to narrow slowly. Since the sixties a growing sociological awareness of the role culture played in academic achievement had emerged. Increasingly, between the 70- 80s¹³ more attention was being called to children's cultures and the *structure* of the school and its relationship to achievement, critiquing the business model of education that quantified educational returns. While "at risk" students were still identified in a deficit narrative of status indicators such as socio-economic status and single parent homes, and behavioral issues, or school *characteristics* such as schools with large urban populations (NCES, 1988), a discursive practice of identifying the mechanisms of the school that contributed to minoritized populations' disenfranchisement was emerging. For all students, the structure of the school was critiqued for its "vertical organization" suggested Cusick (1973. p. 13), whose critique of the school's social-cultural organizational character, include, 1) subject matter specialization, 2) vertical organization, 3) doctrine of adolescent inferiority, 4) downward communication flow, 5) batch processing of students, 6) routinization of activity, 7) Dependence on rules and regulations, 8) future-reward orientation, 9) supporting physical structure (Cusick, 1973, pp. 208-209). He suggested that the intended effects of the organizational model are, 1) students are denied freedom, 2) students are massed, 3) students are undifferentiated (Cusick, 1973, pp. 213-214). *Unintended* organizational effects of the school

educational opportunities"" – defined as equal access to a "basic minimum"" of instruction – for all students" (NYSED, 2009, p. 32).

structure include 1) little student-teacher interaction, 2) little student involvement in formal activities, 3) Fragmentation of educational experience 4) minimal compliance on the part of students, 5) student concern for the maintenance subsystem (Cusick, 1973, pp. 213-214).

“Minority” Experience

Crossing Borders. Yet if, the structure of the school had these effects on mainstream students, how did minoritized students of *different* socio-cultural backgrounds, experience the transition from private to public? When thinking about the function of schooling as a process designed to inculcate into students, the skills and dispositions necessary for them to be contributing members of society, the relationship between public and private is necessarily called into question. The process of moving from private to public has been understood by some as crossing borders. When adolescents are made to cross borders we must ask what their experiences are, and what are the limitations of their participation in greater societal capacities? Phelan, Davidson, and Yu (1993) offer insight into adolescents’ multiple worlds. They define “world” as “the cultural knowledge and behavior found within the boundaries of students’ particular families, peer groups, and school...each world contains values, beliefs, expectations, actions, and emotional responses familiar to insiders...” (Phelan, Davidson, & Yu, 1993, p. 53). Each world is delineated by boundaries:

We refer to boundaries as real or perceived lines between worlds, settings, or contexts that are neutral and where sociocultural components are perceived to be equal by the people in each setting. When boundaries exist, movement between worlds occurs with relative ease – social and psychological costs are minimal. (Phelan, Davidson, & Yu, 1993, p. 53).

Alternatively,

¹³ And certainly, traces of thoughts are not relegated to one decade; indeed, they are fluid. For organizational consistency I use categories, but I offer them as guiding principles, not rigid timeframes.

Borders are real or perceived lines that are not neutral and that separate worlds not perceived as equal. When borders are present, movement and adaptation are frequently difficult because the knowledge and skills in one world are more highly valued and esteemed than those in another. Although it is possible for students to navigate borders with apparent success, these transitions can incur personal and psychic costs invisible to teachers and others. Moreover, borders can become impenetrable barriers when the psychosocial consequences of adaptation become too great. (p. 53)

When youth find cohesion between their home, peer, social, employment and school worlds, border navigation engenders a smooth transition. Conversely, when students lack continuity in the multiple worlds they encounter, border crossings can be manageable, difficult, or impenetrable, signaling a lack of cohesion.

Triple Quandary. Developmental Psychologist A. Wade Boykin (1986) posits three realms of minority experiential negotiation of private and public which he deems a *triple quandary*: the mainstream experience, the minority experience, and the Black cultural home-life experience. *Mainstream negotiation* is the most “pervasive” realm and entails negotiation of all aspects of a functionalist society; Euro-American values define fundamental aspects of mainstream culture and participation is concomitant with minority and Black cultural experience. Secondly, the *minority experience* realm encompasses those who find themselves negotiating a legacy of social, cultural, economic, and political oppression. Experience in this realm is one of adaptive measures, defensive and reactionary posturing which function as coping mechanisms. Thirdly, *the Black cultural experience*, and this is a point of departure from Du Bois’ (2012) double consciousness, entails a culturally indigenous experience whose tenants are antithetical to American culture. This last experiential realm of negotiation occurs at the home level and is one of the earliest referents of how to be in the world; it is reflected in habits, dispositions, and patterns. However, *the Black cultural experience* realm exists outside of the mainstream/minority dichotomy; in this realm youth exist as agents and can simply *be*. Boykin’s triple quandary

notion suggests that entrance for minorities into the social sphere is a constant negotiation of macro-level mainstream American values which temper larger societal aspirations, versus micro-level forms of lived experience. Implicated in the realization of democratic ideals of “economic, educational and social equality” are social structures such as the school which posit dominant values, and institutional agents who can temper the dissonance of students navigating multiple and contradictory realities of public and private (Boykin, 1986, p.89).

Border Pedagogy. Giroux’s (1992) border pedagogy offers a practical understanding of borders situated in larger socio-political discourses. He defines border pedagogy as being “attentive to developing a democratic public philosophy that respects the notion of difference as part of a struggle to extend the quality of public life” (p. 28). Implicit in this work, Giroux argues, is the accompanying need of conditions which allow pedagogical border-crossings and the creation of borderlands, places ‘which allow for the fashioning of new identities within existing configurations of power’ (p. 28). What I have been engaged in up to this point, is a process of “detaching the power of truth” (Foucault, 1980, p. 133) from social, economic, and cultural forms of hegemony through which conceptions of “at risk” have functioned relative to educational discourse. Now, I consider the theoretical orientation of LSYOU.

Understanding LSYOU

LSYOU operates under three assumptions: 1) Historically, research has supported the narrative that the characteristics of “at risk” youth imply greater causality in school dropout “to the exclusion of the school’s organizational structure” (Gaston, 1988, p. 3); 2) “At risk” students possess socio-cultural capital at odds with institutional discourses; and 3) The modification of a school structure coupled with a culturally responsive curriculum could result in positive gains in students’ personal and academic lives.

Emergent Theme 1: Program Theory

Because of its implementation as a social program that emerged through academic discourse, LSYOU can be thought of as a social program addressing a social problem such as school dropout through theoretically informed lenses (Gaston, 1988).

SG: The LSYOU program is actually the one that resulted in the dissertation research. Its first summer was the summer of 1986. It was meant to be a summer program, a summer intervention, and um, it turned out to be highly successful on all of the characteristics that we were measuring. And so we kind of, you know, being very naïve, patted ourselves on the back and said, “Wow, what a great summer.” And within, um, not even a month, within a month and then thereafter, the students started calling and um, it was clear to me that what we had done was, we had given them this new level of hope, and just sent them out there and said, “Bye, have a nice life!” without realizing that it was going to take follow-up. So the follow up phase of the program started after that.

Me: What characteristics were you measuring for?

SG: What we were looking for was um, a change in the students’ attitude, a change in students’ behavior, a change in attitude and behavior that led to extrinsic motivation going into intrinsic motivation, um success that’s measured, actual academic success was measured and academic outcomes, gains in reading and math... Looking for growth in your intentions to stay in school. Looking for growth in what they call the locus of self-control, where you feel like you have more control over your situation than you did before you started. So we had probably five or six characteristics that we measured, the ones that come to my mind.

Student characteristics were measured against the backdrop of an alternative treatment program which is undergirded by the following four premises:

SG: We use, scope. *Scope* is defined as students sharing the same leisure activities all the way down to students share every aspect of their situation together. *Pervasiveness* is another category. It’s a code of behavior in the classroom and you look to see if it translates to every classroom that you’re in. So there’s a number of terms in [the dissertation] *normative compliance*, *participativeness*...

ME: Have they changed? Remained constant?

SG: Constant. We never vary from the model.

SG: Nothing foundational has changed.

Gaston turned to characteristics of “business models” to design an organizational structure that would be more participatory in nature, more horizontal, for all parties involved, soliciting greater

student compliance, or emotional involvement in the school organization, thus reducing student alienation. I present the organizational themes below as they have salience for this chapter's concluding analysis.

Likert's – Participative Management

Likert's participative management style suggests that organizations that are characterized by subordinate – superior relations that are supportive, share decision making, have open communication, trust, and high expectations, produce greater employee involvement and productivity. Adapting “greater employee involvement and productivity” to the LSYOU model, the implications are that supportive environments will produce greater student compliance and positive behavior modification. In the context of LSYOU, participativeness is exhibited through implementation at the level of supportive relationships exhibited by advisors and peer counselors with students.

Etzioni - Normative Compliance

Compliance is a universal phenomenon, and is defined as the way in which one behaves in accordance with a directive issued by the power of another, and one's orientation to the power applied (Etzioni, 1961). Normative compliance “rests on the allocation and manipulation of symbolic rewards and deprivations” (p. 5). Normative compliance yields very high moral involvement, a “positive orientation of high intensity” of involvement, in an organization. The implications are that students with high moral involvement will internalize norms for behavior and identify with the authority of LSYOU.

Etzioni – Organizational Scope

An organization's scope can be understood as the organization's "embrace," to its lower-level participants. Organizations often serve as the "collectivity" in which many of an individual's activities take place. Etzioni suggests "the degree to which an organization "embraces" an individual is inversely related to the degree that he [sic] participates in other collectivities which constitute the social environment of the organization" (p. 160).

Organizations are considered broad in scope when participants share many activities (these can be social and formal). In order to yield greater subordinate compliance, participants must have "relative emotional significance of participation in one collectivity compared to that in others (p. 161)." The degree to which a person feels emotionally a part of the organization and compliant to its rules, is relative to their emotional involvement in the organizational collectivity as compared to other collectivities (this is known as salience) i.e., how much do members feel a part of the organization versus their involvement in other collectivities. Typical collectivities which solicit high emotional attachment and thus greater involvement are families, communities, and nations. Thus the greater the scope, level of activities, the higher degree of salience, emotional investment, resulting in involvement and identification with the organization. In the context of LSYOU, scope is defined as the number of activities shared by participants. Examples of activities are, eating together, going to class together, rooming together, etc.

Etzioni – Pervasiveness

Pervasiveness is defined as a range of acceptable activities in or outside the organization for which the organization sets norms. The idea is to socialize the students by pervading their other collectivities by setting norms for behavior that they will maintain in and out of the classroom. An organization that is high in scope (number of activities experienced together) and high in pervasiveness (norming ways of behavior) will yield greater compliance, emotional

investment, on behalf of the students, similar to the affective nature of families, church units, peer groups. Thus, LSYOU defines acceptable instructional and leisurely activities and behaviors for the students. Acceptable activities include codes of character, hygiene, life skills, etc.

Analysis

I suggest that LSYOU functions as a discursive formation through which alternative understandings of “at risk” can be explored. As I showed earlier, the language of eugenics as a discourse practice and early curriculum theory developmental tool was one of power and knowledge on the shaping of subjectivities. LSYOU’s theoretical basis makes clear the ideological assumptions which govern practice. On the one hand, it functions as an “intervention” into the lives of youth who have demonstrated behavioral, poor academic achievement, low motivation, or whom come from poverty backgrounds. Stanton-Salazar & Spina (2000) critique the term “intervention” for the deficit view it historically conveys, instead suggesting usage of the term “mediation” for its dialectic and conciliatory connotations while not being unidirectional. Yet, I have no qualms with “intervention” as it relates to growth in students “intentions to stay in school.” That the theoretical framework draws upon business models, might suggest the same business model turn in education with its emphasis on accountability and outcomes (NYSED, 2009). Instead, I suggest unlike the outcome-driven technical-rationality like business model which focused labor market concerns, the business-model upon which LSYOU draws, emphasizes firstly a “participatory” organizational structure aiming to elicit greater “emotional involvement” of students in the school structure. Like the traditional school, LSYOU is still a part of larger educational discourse whose ultimate aim is to equip students with the necessary skills to intelligently participate in the labor market. As Apple (2009) notes, “the school is the only major institution that stands between the family and the labor market” (p. 47).

So in some ways these two institutions can be said to serve similar functions, in that they both mediate the socialization process between private and public. Yet, LSYOU differs in its intentionality of creating an environment aiming to elicit student buy-in, thus exhibiting *intentionality*.

The implications of the theoretical framework as ideology and practice at the intersection of minoritized populations' social experiences are many. In other words, we must look past the *promise* of education and look at the *practices*. Here, I refer to the everyday-ness of bodies enmeshed in spatio-temporal places because, "the body is also the place where social influence gets *stuck*," a "problem [which] might perhaps be countered by a particularity of engagement that addresses materiality within coherent and detailed accounts of the totality of the specific relations obtaining between body, subjectivity and world" (Blackman, Cromby, Hook, Papadopoulos, & Walkerdine, 2008, p. 19). As the literature suggests, subordinate-superior, teacher student relationships are fraught with conflict (Milner, 2012; Biesta, 2010; Freire, 2009). Their participative management discursively critiques these power differentials through supportive environments shared by dialogue and trust. The concepts of scope and pervasiveness, understood as frequency of bond forming interactions and maintenance, reflect the everyday structures that students experience as part of their preferred social institutions (Oliver, 2006). As a matter of a language of interaction, world-crossing may not be as much of a psychic impairment, a "triple quandary" for youth accustomed to socialization mechanisms that frequently occur over notions of communalism and trust. Unlike the historical narrative that changes the language but not the structure, the language of theory LSYOU employs translates to material practices that make border crossing for minoritized populations less fraught with difficulty.

Emergent Theme 2: Relationality

Long-Term Case-Management

In addition to the theoretical framework, equally characteristic of LSYOU is the relationality inherent in their case-managed approach. LSYOU is long-term case-managed intervention for adolescents typically 14-16 years of age, two years academically behind their peers upon entrance into the summer portion of the program. Possibly owing to Dr. Gaston's background as a school counselor, a case-managed approach seems like a logical outgrowth of her former experience.

SG: ...in 1990 I did a paper for AERA that did a longitudinal research of the students who had been in the program for years. And then, when we realized what was necessary, the model started encompassing this long-term intervention. *And I guess, that's the difference, it's a long-term intervention. And what we have found is that short-term interventions don't seem to be successful at all. Long-term interventions tend to be a lot more successful.*

In practice a long-term case-managed approach means that "every student" is followed "no matter where they go." Each student is assigned a case manager who has developed a strong relationship with the student and who works with the student through the entire active phase of the program. The active phase of the program begins with the summer intervention component preceeding the students' entrance into high school (although funding restraints often reverse this order, and makes the program begin services to students during the academic semester. As the summer portion is pivotal to the program because it creates "bonds" between students and inculcates them to a greater degree into the LSYOU family, if funding order is reversed students receive LSYOU's academic services at the beginning of their freshman year and then undergo the summer component of the program).

SG: It's very relationship driven...It's your relationship with whomever in the program you have developed a strong relationship with that you are assigned a case manager that works with you through the course of that time. It is very relationship driven, it is case-managed, it is data driven.

What does relationality look like in practice? Dr. Gaston speaks of one dimension of case-management relationality:

SG: We'll follow a student wherever they go as long as a student remains in contact with us... But we do a very, we have a very intensive job of trying to locate a student. Once we find out that a student is missing...we have staff that start making phone calls to all, like for example when they enter the program, they put down every phone number that you can imagine. And for the parents it's a safety measure, you know, we need to know in case something happens to your child when he's with us. So we'll get lots of numbers and we'll start calling them, all those numbers, and maybe there's an aunt or a grandmother that's still in town that can give you a new number. And then sometimes you just fall into a dead in.

Relationality through Funding

Me: So what effect do you think the program has on participants?

SG: So again, level of services, so what we found, and again going back to the dissertation, that whole thing about scope and pervasiveness, are two very important terms... but it's the amount of time that students spend together, doing the same kinds of activities and so the design of the program was meant that these kids are together doing those activities, all day long, every day. They'd switch groups, might be that I'm your roommate in the dorm group here but we're in a different math group and a different elective group, and a different whatever, so that *bonds are formed as the groups move from place to place. That is an essential role in making some long-term changes. And that takes, unfortunately, takes funding to do that.*

It's about \$5000 a child to bring them to the LSU campus, for six weeks, when you consider you're paying for their dorm, you're paying for room and board, you're paying for activities with them. You're paying for teachers to teach them, really two sessions a day, the general schedule would be that they would go to school for four hours – four and a half hours- they'd go to work on a campus job for four hours, and then they would go separate, and then come back to counseling sessions and then they'd leave counseling sessions, and then they would go back for dorm sessions. So you had this enormous rotating staff. So that \$5000 per semester is a big investment, for summer rather. It's an enormous investment...But once that initial investment is over, you have basically, your 9,10,11,12 grade years are just wonderful because you've got a lot of buy in so the cost per year then drops down to about \$800 to \$900 a child. So it's a large investment up front with small - but we did look at that and that was part of our grant to AT&T. That you could, for about \$10,000 but you had to look at it over, no one thinks that \$10,000

over four years is a long time. It's just that \$5000 over six weeks looks like a long time. So packaging it, it's a \$10,000 investment per child over their entire time in high school. And that's how we're trying to package it.

Funding and relationality are interrelated. Relationality can be said to be understood as contingent upon level of services, i.e. the services that can be offered within the limitations of grant guidelines. Thus, relationality as a level of services both effectuated through the material and symbolic practices are ultimately contingent upon funding. The transcription which follows is taken from a promotional video of LSYOU. This promotional video is shown to parents at parent orientation day. There are three student voices, a narrator, and Suzan Gaston's voice. The transcription provides insight into how funding drives relationality.

Student Voice 1: I began with LSYOU in the summer of 2002.

Student Voice 2: LSYOU was there for me. They gave me hope.

Student Voice 3: I was here in 2006 but like, I was bad when I came here.

Student Voice 1: LSU changed my life. I couldn't express it in words, I really couldn't.

Student Voice 3: They made me learn to listen.

Student Voice 2: So when I came I got the drive and I know it's nothing I can't do since I started LSYOU.

Suzan Gaston (SG): In the early days of LSYOU what we found out is that there were lots of needs that the students had that could not be funded through federal funds due to certain guidelines.

Student Voice 3: Until I had been to LSYOU, never went to a waterpark, never been to a movie, never been to the mall.

Narrator: Essentials most of us take for granted: clothing, personal care items, a trip to the movies.

SG: When you're doing a program that requires long-term intervention, that's relationship driven, if you want that program to work you can't stop and start whenever funding becomes a problem.

Student Voice 1: I had just completed my 9th grade year. And I had a, 1.7 GPA. And it really hurt me.

SG: Had we pulled out at a certain time, we're not really sure if we would have been able to get them back.

Student Voice 1: Ever since LSYOU came into my life, I was able to bring that GPA all the way up to a 3.5 and I ended up graduating with honors from high-school.

Narrator: ...and only through the continued support...

SG: Without the funding from the Pennington Foundation, we may have had to close our doors several times throughout these last 25 years.

Student 2: And all my friends from the LSYOU program, we still keep in touch, it's like a big family. Like they, you never lose touch with them.

SG: LSYOU changes lives by forming relationships with students and bringing them into, we actually call it, "The LSYOU family."

Student 3: I wouldn't be doing what I was supposed to be doing right now, I'd probably be doing the opposite.

SG: ...Where they are nurtured and matured. And they can develop into young adults.

Student Voice 3: I think coming to LSU brought me out of my shell...I thank 'em for that....LSYOU is my family. That's basically what I have to say right there.

Student 2: It was a show we used to watch. It was a cartoon called "Kim Possible." And she like was a teenager that saved the world. And when I came to LSYOU I felt like Kim Possible – it was nothing I couldn't do; I could save the world if I wanted to.

Narrator: For providing the resources necessary to make the impossible possible, for hundreds of young adults, for their continuous support of the LSYOU program, as well as for their generous contributions, made to the future of effective education, Capital Campaign and the university laboratory school. The LSU College of Education honors, the Irene W and CB Pennington Foundation¹⁴.

End.

Relational Surety with Parents

Today is the parental information session day. The first group of families has just left Hatcher Hall with the requisite paperwork for their kids to enter LSYOU in the upcoming days, having been assured that there is enough funding for their kids. The second group of prospective families whose children will be entering the summer cohort enter the room. These families are

¹⁴ LSU College of Education honors Irene W. and C.B. Pennington Foundation.

mostly African Americans. Mothers accompany their children. One father accompanies his child. Like students, the families sit in the desks of the classroom in which the informational session is being held.

10:00 a.m.: Dr. Gaston explains the rules of the program. She explains the no cell phone policy. Some of the students' reluctance at the policy is evident by their facial expressions. However, Dr. Gaston says once students see end-results of the program, they will better understand the reason for the strict rules.

10:15a.m. Like students, the families quiet down, when the projector at the front of the classroom is lowered and the lights are dimmed. Immediately you hear, "...I began with LSYOU in the summer of 2002. LSYOU was there for me, they gave me hope..."

At the video's conclusion, the lights are switched on. As if to continue the LSYOU narrative, Dr. Gaston enumerates the perks of being an LSYOU student, students will have the opportunity to get work experience, they will participate in programs such as the summer coastal program, they will go on trips, and they will take college tours. They will become members of the LSYOU family. And yet, this informational session is quite unlike the first. Soon, it will be explained to the prospective parents and their children that currently, the funding which supports the Baton Rouge cohort (students in the recovery district) is in limbo. There is a chance that LSYOU will not be able to accept the kids who currently sit in the room.

But if funding has not been approved and the likelihood exists that these parents have been shuttled here by the LSYOU vans in vain, then why are they here? An LSYOU advisor working in tandem with Dr. Gaston to facilitate the session speaks to the crowd. She tells them they were brought in today as an act of fidelity, an act of transparency. As of this morning, funding has still not been approved. It is explained to the attentive parents that they did not wish to convey this news to them over the phone. If funding comes in, their kids will represent the pool from which participants will be selected. If funding is made available in the next week, phone calls will be made, parents will be contacted, and the Baton Rouge cohort will have a

presence in the summer portion of the program. On this act of fidelity, parents are given the opportunity to complete enrollment paperwork for their children. At the end of collecting paperwork, a parent says, “thank you,” to the program advisor. Even though LSYOU cannot ensure the kids’ inclusion, already, even in the beginning, parents feel indebted. It seems as if the act of fidelity has won the parents’ approval. That these two groups, one a socially disenfranchised population, the other, institutional gatekeepers are communicating at all has major implications for knowledge that emerges about culturally responsive practices.

Social Closeness. Anyon (1997) says, “social distance arising in part from lack of common experience and knowledge of each other in people of different class and racial backgrounds can impair communication, trust, and joint action” (p. 23). From what I gather from the events of parent information day and from the LSYOU video clip, LSYOU is guaranteeing relational surety, not simply through structural implementations at the organizational level but also through material practices, such as this one. Part of what makes relationality possible is a systems view understanding of the families LSYOU serves and a willingness to attend intricately to the nuances of the population. On any given day, around the campus of LSU, white vans can be seen shuttling to and from campus. These unmarked white vans travel to Amite, Lavonia, Donaldsonville, Plaquemine, and a host of other places. When they return to Hatcher Hall, students tumble out into the concrete foyer. Sometimes the van driver will exit also and sit on one of the benches outside, before his next departure. Other times he will shuttle off to his next destination, where he may return with parents. Yet the significance of the vans is more than their punctuality in transporting kids to campus, or transporting advisors to recruit kids’ at their homes, or transporting the kids’ families to attend campus events. The significance lies in the very fact that there are vans at all. Especially in the city in which sprawling urban landscapes

persist, and public transportation has only recently undergone transit reform. The fact there are vans at all, communicates something altogether different to the silent observer. The very fact that vans are central to the day-to-day functioning of LSYOU, suggests an understanding of the barriers at-risk populations face, such as lack of transportation to and from educational activities. Thus, when parents are transported to campus to attend a parental information session despite a potential lack of funding, I suggest that relational surety, what I am defining as symbolic, material, and/or ideological practices which engender trust with a population (the intersection of rhetoric and action), is still being effectuated.

However, and I think the video supports this notion, while the LSYOU narrative is one of relationality, it is also evident that in its best attempts, relationality has its limits. Dr. Gaston sums it up best in the video clip: “When you’re doing a program that requires long-term intervention, that’s relationship driven, if you want that program to work you can’t stop and start whenever funding becomes a problem.” Funding is imperative to the LSYOU narrative, determining the level of services students receive, the level of services ultimately determining the intensity of relationality (how much the kids do together which invokes greater emotional attachment *and* how much the LSYOU identity becomes a part of their identity).

Analysis

It is important to understand first, that the LSYOU promotional video is an institutional artifact of appreciation to funders. As such, the student narratives which follow must necessarily display “lack” or negate the “need” of the type of funding that donors such as the Pennington Foundation provide. As I explained earlier, funding has been central to the historical narrative of “at risk” discourse, as it was a social contract between the federal government and communities with large concentrations of poor students. What funding makes possible is more central to an

understanding of “at risk” as a discursive construction; funding enables LSYOU to provide greater intensity of services. The LSYOU family is made possible through its ability to “form relationships with students,” with level of services provided as a consequence of funding availability. The LSYOU family then, is relational. Not only is relationality evidenced through relationships with case-managing advisors, it is multidirectional, also occurring at the level of peer-to-peer relationships. Additionally bond-forming occurs as a type of curriculum, as the students “move from group to group” participating in a curriculum targeting education, career development, life skills, and health – these discourses which are not as explicit in the promotional video as they are in the interview. Relational surety is also effectuated with parents of students. The literature suggests that effective summer programs, in which LSYOU is included, are characterized by affordability and accessibility, involvement of parents, and involvement of the community (Terzian, Moore, & Hamilton, 2009).

Implication: Institutional Practices

Institutions and institutional gatekeepers often serve as holders of knowledge, skills, and dispositions minoritized, low SES, students need to be successful in society (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Institutions are endowed with power and serve as gatekeepers to social mobility (Apple, 2009; Lareau, 1988). Institutions and their relationships with working-class populations of color have historically been contentious (Ogbu, 1974). Specifically educational institutions have been at odds with working-class populations, many of whom would be categorized by today’s rhetoric as “at risk”, since the time of modern school reform. That traditional discourses of “at risk” heavily implicate exclusion and minoritization based upon ethnicity and SES exists, it becomes important to understand the ways in which discursive formations critique historical power/knowledge structures. For LSYOU this entails relationality that functions as the olive

branch merging institutional and private discourses. The participative management model that LSYOU uses which is characterized by support, trust, shared decision making, is an uncommon ideological position when dealing with “at risk” youth.

This is in stark contrast to Fine’s (1991) finding of ideological and structural mechanisms that assist in the framing of dropouts, and of their subsequent dropping out of public schools. She argues that “*silencing* provides a metaphor for the structural, ideological, and practical organization” of schools that are antidemocratic to low, working class children and their families (p. 61). Silencing is characterized by its ability to protect administration by the institutionalization of practices in the classroom, and by the muting of students’ voices. Economies of power are procedures which allow the effects of power to circulate in a manner “at once continuous, uninterrupted, adapted, and individualized throughout the entire social body” (Foucault, 1980, p. 119). Yet, the narratives provided in the previous chapter and in this chapter, show how the organizational structure of the LSYOU program allows for dialogue, as the ability to dialogue is a characteristic feature of their environmental and structural culture. Educationalists increasingly believe that dialogue is essential to humanitarian projects and have gone so far as to highlight structural alternatives that allow for dialogic practices in educative spaces (Freire, 2009).

Discussion: Family as Matter of Language, Discourse, and Practice

The Institutionalization of Family

What is a family? The framing of this question presupposes assumptions of objectivity. A more useful approach might be to understand the political, cultural, social, and economic hegemony inherent in Western categorization mechanisms that have institutionalized

conceptions of the family through genetic and cohabitation practices, supporting the linear North American narrative of morality articulated through religious perspectives and legalistic constructions (Ball, 1972). Detaching the word from the context of handed-down historical master-narrative enables a space to problematize the traditionalism of the word to explore additional interpretive possibilities. Taken for granted notions of family are the consequences of the socio-judicial legalization of the discourse on the family, promoting the family as 1) a socially legitimate sexual union, 2) publically announced, 3) with some idea of performance, and 4) assumed with a contract, 5) reciprocal economic obligations, 6) common residence, and 7) the rights and duties of parenthood (Ball, 1972, p. 297). The totality of this linear North American narrative collapses under critique. Ball (1972) citing William Stephens' critical analysis notes, long-term sexual unions persist outside of social legitimacy; public announcements are a matter of preference; performance as a notion suggests temporality of the time of union; marriage contracts are discursively spoken and not institutionalized; economic obligations are idealistic; common residence negates reality of many cultural structures; rights of parent belong to those who have (had) children. Simply based upon the variance described here, power knowledge relationships become explicit in an unpacking of a notion of family. Further, that "family" earns its legitimacy through codification of legal discourses, the same legal discourses through which institutionalized oppression were sanctioned, through the non-acknowledgement of concurrent discursive familial constructs existing outside of legal protection but that emerged in response to institutionalized oppression, makes clear the constant American practice of the ability to name the language of experience that exists within the contradiction of practice. Detaching the "power of truth from the forms of hegemony (Foucault, 1980, p. 133), it becomes possible to realize that

“family” as a social construct is a contestable, contradictory, and complex term rooted in discourses of power.

Disrupting “Family”

We might instead question “how are notions of family understood as discursive formations of socially constructed contextualized practices within different sociocultural and political milieus”? What remains when we strip away commonsense ideas about what constitutes a family and consider the family not by a priori definition but as evidenced by social conduct and organization (Ball, 1972)? I would like to suggest that not only have conceptions of the family proliferated in discourses of power, but also as the result of specific class and race interests. In order for cognizance of the different conceptual grid I am about to present, which will unpack the fictive nature of historical “truth,” I will show that “truth production” is an ideological mechanism functioning as a social apparatus that produces truth as part of a political economy in order to sustain power relationships. I want to problematize notions of fact and fiction. Foucault (1980) states:

As to the problem of fiction, it seems to me to be a very important one; I am well aware that I have never written anything but fictions. *I do not mean to say, however, that truth is therefore absent. It seems to me that the possibility exists for fiction to function in truth, for a fictional discourse to induce effects of truth, and for bringing it about that a true discourse engenders or ‘manufactures’ something that does not as yet exist, that is, ‘fictions’ it.* One ‘fictions’ history on the basis of a political reality that makes it true, one ‘fictions’ a politics not yet in existence on the basis of a historical truth [my italics] (p. 193).

The three assumptions of Foucault’s that will inform the analysis to follow are that 1) fiction can function in truth, 2) fictional discourses can induce effects of truth, 3) discourse ‘fictions’ reality. To show the fictive nature of historical truth as it relates to the power to define “family,” to

legitimate the reproduction of social and economic experience, I turn to Fordham (2010) and her notion of “passin’ for Black.”

1. Fiction can function in truth.

The American experience is less about race than it is about property¹⁵.

2. Fictional discourses can induce effects of truth.

Fordham (2010) suggests to be culturally White is as much a fiction as being culturally Black. The White/Black binary, a typical structure of Western rationality was, and is, a conflation of biology and social ideology sustaining stratified inequity.

3. Discourse ‘fictions’ reality.

What remains from this Western, patriarchal narrative is its “reproductive power” in the codification of power/knowledge/subjectivity relationships which have sustained the fiction of “whiteness” and the fiction of “passin’ for Black” in American discourse.

A language of experience that exists within the contradiction of practice is evident in Fordham’s analysis of the conflicting practice in American slavery of miscegenation between White slave owners and Black slaves and the resulting dichotomous ownership and disowning of the children by their White fathers who had the legal sanction of the “one drop rule.” The one drop rule, Fordham explains, “meant that every child who could not claim a White mother was socially defined as Black” (p. 12), which allowed for the categorization of the child as racially Black thus absolving White fathers from paternity, engendering their reproductive freedom, and maintaining a fictitious line of private (family) versus public (the socially practice of the codification of human ownership), when the two practices truly existed as one. The Black slave mothers had no legal recourse of maternity over their biracial children; the White fathers had legal sanctions to disavow paternity while maintaining property rights of their offspring and enslaved Black mothers. The slave mother, the always-already child/property, and the White master, existed in a profoundly fictive narrative. Fordham (2010) questions how

“nothing in the literature helps us to understand how the imagined Black community emerged from a hybridized, creole population...Blackness is an American cultural invention. People of African ancestry have had to learn two contradictory things concurrently: how not to be White and how to become Black. Codification of bifurcated racial categories forced everybody within the imagined African American community, regardless of skin color and their alleged, immediate, or remote paternity, to steal a fictive, pristine Black identity... A chosen Blackness transforms the biracial or hybridized body with African ancestry into the socially constructed, racialized Black person.” (pp. 11-12).

Fordham’s analysis of essentialist notions of race as the political economy of economic relations highlights the process by which fiction can function in truth (i.e. the myth that mixed race children remain biologically heterogeneous but must assume a homogenous identity), can induce effects of truth, (i.e. the subsequent social stratification that engendered essentialist notions of Whiteness and Blackness), discourse ‘fictions’ reality (i.e. that notions of kin are inherently bound to one’s [s]kin).

To consider the original question of “What is family?” through Fordham’s analysis we see how the dominant historical Western narrative of family as constituted through genetics and cohabitates is a fiction that is sustained by the truth of White patriarchal privilege through social legitimacy, when offspring was biracial. If we consider family as an analytical object of social conduct and organization through Fordham’s analysis we see how biology does not constitute a truth of kinship, as much as skin color [skinship] constitutes true kinship, as in the case of Black slave mothers who held no legal recourse to their children due to being subsumed in a discourse of property vis-à-vis race. If we revisit the alternative question then, of *how are notions of family understood as discursive formations of socially constructed contextualized practices within different sociocultural and political milieus?*, we are better positioned to eschew ideological assumptions that fetter normalizing discourses and consider the nuances of “family” as

¹⁵ McCarthy would take issue with this stance. Pinar et al. (2008) suggest that McCarthy would note “locating racism within capitalism is historically and empirically inaccurate”, due to slavery “antedating capitalism” (p. 318),

discursive practices. Those fictions and truths being acknowledged, Fordham's analysis locates a discursive event in American cultural consciousness that would perpetuate another socially discursive event known as fictive kinships – relationships characterized by mutuality, trust, and reciprocity (Fordham, 1996). In the previous chapter then, where notions of kinship emerge in the place and experiential practices of an alternative organizational program, the fiction of public and private as two separate entities are subsumed under an age-old traditional practice of both-in-one.

Now, if an exploration of family as notions of genetics and legal construction has proven to be multiple, complex, and contradictory, fluttering in and out of privileged discourses, a different analytic grid becomes necessary to use to contextualize family in more recent historical moments.

Working Class Families in Modern Historical Context

A discursive analysis of family as an effect of discursive practices of minority, low income families will show that family as a concept functions differently both in an examination of family as a social unit, and when family as a discourse is racialized. I do this by employing three tenants of critical race theory: race is a significant predictor of inequity; U.S. society is based on property rights; and, understanding race and property relations provide a unique analytic tool for understanding inequity (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Harris, 1993).

Characteristics. Family in a Western sense follows several assumptions: 1) the family is nuclear, two parents and two siblings, 2) the nuclear family unit resides under one domicile (which defines spatio-geographical boundaries), 3) the family socializes children into dominant societal norms and is the vehicle to social mobility. These three assumptions were typically

among other reasons.

uncharacteristic of the students in the program. Specifically, for the students whom are in the program, knowledge of their subjectivities, through an historically constructed perspective, reveals quite different socialization patterns which continue to be presently exhibited (Ogbu, 1978). There is a tendency for non-majority urban, low income households to be largely matriarchal, where the parent's educational level does not exceed secondary education. These "caste barriers" affect status mobility and family structure (Ogbu, 1978). The lack of parental higher education is strongly correlated with lower income (Laureau, 1987), and as bachelor degrees become the standard for advanced positions, the parent's social and educational level negatively affects the transmission of dominant societal values, skills, and dispositions that the child needs to function in middle class society. Specifically, the children in the LSYOU program often lived with extended family members such as cousins, nieces, and nephews. Patricia Hill Collins (1991) explains how extended families function in African-American communities: "Grandmothers, sisters, aunts, or cousins act as othermothers by taking on child-care responsibilities for one another's children" (pp. 119-120). Fictive kin also proved to be a strong way of expressing bonds formed in the program. Additionally, what became clear in the data is that the kids' norms (their knowledge to live by) were often contradictory to established cultural norms, a particularly salient example, that notions of brotherhood for the young men are subsumed in mob culture. A racial and class analysis reveals that these students had quite different capital than that of the nuclear family.

Private vs. Public. As institutional gatekeepers (and gatekeeping mechanisms) largely preserve dominant ideologies of society and of the institution, low income families of color have the least access to middle class cultural networks and lack the accumulated social capital and lack the knowledge of the activation of that capital required by dominant society (Stanton-

Salazar, 1997; Lareau, 1987). Further, institutional gate keepers tend to be from majority populations, and gatekeeping mechanisms function through institutional practices which function to protect the interests of majority members through the maintenance of race as property (Harris, 1993) and exhibited in material practices such as rewarding students who exhibit middle-class characteristics. That ideological and material valuation of class interest manifests materially in educative spaces becomes evident in the historical socialization patterns of an “overrepresentation” of minority students in special education classes (Ford, 2012). Specifically, in the field of education, a long contentious history exists between institutional climate and practices and non-majority populations (Stanton Salazar, 1997; Ogbu, 1978) prompting scholars to call for a paying of the debts moral, educational, and historical (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Milner, 2012) and others to address the ‘significant material and psychic consequences’ (Mitchell, Wood, & Witherspoon, 2010, p. 294) of institutionalized oppression as a discursive practice. Simply stated, whiteness is an institutionalized privilege that is reflected in curricular and institutional gatekeeping and in the codification of legal practices (West-Olatunji et al., 2010; Harris, 1993), all of which function as economies of power. “Whiteness” is the cultural currency of dominant social systems, schools, institutions, curricula, and popular culture. To be “white” equips one with a type of knapsack of privilege (McIntosh, 1989) that allows for effortless journeying between worlds – a type of global citizenship supported by the metanarrative of Western rationalism. Whiteness then is a form of capital, and in its institutionalized state “is used for social and cultural exclusion” (Lamont & Lareau, 1988, p. 156). All of this to say again, a discussion of “enculturated” bodies (Blackman et al., 2008) highlights how “structural forces in a complex society determine, or at least constrain, the network relations developed and maintained by individuals” (Cochran, 1990, p. 10).

Now, I consider LSYOU and the implication of the “LSYOU Family” as a discursive formation.

LSYOU

What are the implications of an organization using the idea of the family as a language of interaction and as a discourse practice? Ball (1972) suggests that an analysis of family should identify commitments, characteristics of attachments, and the desired alterations of both (p. 305). All organizations can be understood as being political, that is a question of power, yet with different types of goals. As is the case with LSYOU and the institution of the school, the goal of a culture oriented organization is to “institutionalize conditions needed for the creation and preservation of symbolic objects, their application, and the creation or reinforcement of commitments to such objects” (Etzioni, 1961, p. 73). Because of their aims at cultural norm internalization these types of organizations must solicit “positive and intense commitments of lower participants” (Etzioni, 1961, p. 82) using a type of normative power, power that attracts commitment through mutuality rather than influences by threats or coercion. Orientation is determined by the subordinate’s consideration of the applied power to be legitimate and congruent to his world view. Whether positively or negatively oriented, orientation is considered to be the level of *involvement*. The subordinate will either respond positively (with more commitment) or negatively (with more alienation) to the type of power employed (Etzioni, 1961). An identifiable commitment of the theoretical framework then is mutuality that is predicated upon both organizational and student commitment. Now, I will consider Ball’s (1972) second suggestion: problematizing family through understanding characteristics of attachments.

LSYOU Family

The LSYOU Family is characterized by relationality, both theoretical and practical. Students *spend a great deal of time together doing the same types and numbers of activities together* which fosters bonds and increases students' sense of belongingness and identification with the identity of the organization. Additionally as students identify more with the organizational identity, they began to *internalize the organizational norms and effectuate them in and outside of the organization*. As the students in the program tend to have issues ranging from behavioral, to psychosocial issues such as self-esteem, the maintenance of organizational norms in private discourses can be understood as an additive function. As families and schools serve as types of socializing mechanisms, LSYOU is one of many socializing mechanisms, among others. "LSYOU Family" socialization is a long-term process, effectuated through the intensity of activities members of the family unit undergo together, and the bonds formed because of the frequency and intensity of the activities undergone. Educational goals are coupled with bond formation. In this way, the historical narrative of education as alienation for working class students, is rejected in favor of an educational narrative characterized by belongingness.

An overreliance on the roles that teachers exhibit as points of access to institutional capital, while important, reduces the possibility for identifying additional resource rich institutional agents such as counselors, academicians, and intervention specialists; additionally through an encouragement of interdisciplinarity with counseling, sociology, human ecology, the sciences, and the humanities departments with the discursive material, ideological, and social networks they bring to the populations they serve. The *positionalities* of resource rich institutional agents can affect the level of services they provide to students of color from working-class backgrounds (Ogbu, 1974; West-Olatunji et al., 2010; Stanton-Salazar, 2011;

Milner, 2007). The positionalities exhibited by the LSYOU institutional gatekeepers towards the students are consistent with an “empowerment” (Stanton-Salazar; 2011) identity, in equipping the students with “biculturality” networking capital, the ability to functionally cross-borders and “decode” systems of power (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Ball’s (1972) last consideration for problematizing a notion of family hinges upon the dialogism between the first two suggestions, that is, once identification of kinds of commitments and the characteristics of attachments have been identified, the remaining consideration is an understanding of *the desired alterations in both*. In the case of the students, whose early narratives about the program expressed trepidation or reluctance about participation, voices within the veil revealed that the LSYOU Family functions as institutional support immersed in practices of concern, dialogue, and care in institutional and home settings. In the case of LSYOU, a knowledge of working class students’ experiences in public spaces coupled with an explicit critique of the impersonal nature of the school, led to the desiring of working class student commitment and attachment to an alternative organizational structure, characterized by intentional bond-forming of working class youth and their families with organizational members. Family then can be understood as a consensus by participants.

Instead of questioning, “What might be lost as students join the LSYOU Family?” as I imagine students navigating shifting topographies, from private to public, from their houses, to their porches, through the streets, on college campuses, to the crossing over across graduation stages, I turn a wary eye towards the subtlety of deficit logic inherent in its assumption. Instead, understanding their knowledge of border crossing techniques through a social capital network accumulation perspective, I question, “What has been gained?” Then the idea of LSYOU as an institutional family functions as a subversive construct to the dominant societal narrative of

Westernized individualism, rejection through [s]kinships and class, bridging a historical narrative, and adding a discursive storyline with new characters and new settings - a tale that opens with the possibility of working class youth who conceive institutional gatekeepers as fictive kin.

Post Script

The page reads like the want ads for separated siblings. *OMG its been a while i miss u guys...we really need a reunion i was lookin through all da pics brought back so many beautiful moments.* And another, *I would lyke twee see me wit mi lsyoun family... @lol* And yet another, *Hello...miss yall*, and another, *I feel like you guys are mii extended family*. Post after post is imbued with a type of bittersweet longing for the past. It seems very clear that everyone here is looking for someone else. And in the way a mother duck watches over her ambling ducklings, every post is acknowledged, no child is left behind.

As a mother then, the Office of At-Risk Initiatives at LSU has done a fine job of creating a family-like support structure on their Facebook page for their students. There are successes: *Hello...Wow its been a good minute since ive talked to My LSYOU Family so excited and i would love to see you all again I miss It and Love You all so much for Being a part of my life ..I am currently a senior at Grambling State University and doing well but it was good to see the faces again!!!... Love.* And there are tragedies: *Another member of our family has closed their eyes for the last time. He was only 17 years old... A member of the GEAR UP portion of our program, [he] was a frequent participant of our on campus tutoring program.* Always reassuring, a post from the LSYOU office reassures former program participants, *...we are never too busy to talk to you...once family, always family!* Like a true family then, space, place, and time do not interrupt – they only create a pause. – (LSYOU Facebook page quotes are in italics)

CHAPTER 6: JOURNEY TOWARDS ANOTHER QUESTION

Who and what am I? Who and what are human beings? Where do I stop and where does the world begin? Our answers to these questions may determine how we think about ourselves, our neighbours, our enemies, people in general and even animals. The answers may also determine our ethics. After all, the justification for treating someone in a specific way often boils down to who or what we think they are, and who or what we think we are. Of course, the “we” that we are talking about here does not only refer to individuals, but can also refer to any instance where groups of people are identified as wholes, including organizations. (Villiers-Botha & Cilliers, 2010, p. 19)

Homo sum, humani nil a me alienum puto. I am human, and nothing human can be alien to me.
That’s one thing I’m learning. (Maya Angelou)

Why not simply try to touch the other, feel the other, discover each other? (Fanon, 2008, p. 206)

I quote these three authors because they help us to reconsider the subtle logic of othering, and show how, in using an alternative paradigm typical of the relationality that precludes Western rationalism, they offer tools for how we might do away with notions of ‘othering’ which tend to draw lines and instead move towards a literal *familiarization*, whereby though different we become familiar to each other. To be *familiar* means to be closely acquainted and frequently seen or experienced (Merriam-Webster, 2009). To revisit an earlier question of what is a family, perhaps we should further remove our social, cultural, political, and chronological orientations to understand how notions of family are experienced by people the world over through place and space and time. What happens when we remove the political Western orientation that determines a family is a group who resides under the same roof, and expand our conception of family beyond the mechanisms of spatio-geographical boundary delineating, which is so common to stories of Western Imperialism? How blindsighted are we when policies consider the family as a nuclear construct, which denies the realization that cultural and social groups due to historical oppression, have had to enact and redefine notions of family in discursive non-nuclear ways, patterns of which can still be seen today, as in the case of students in this program to

whom fictive kin have served as an extension of their social network. More frightening for some to imagine still are the implications of institutions which are fostering relationships that are blurring the lines between public and private, when public has traditionally been enacted as a comfortable space for white male privilege, while private has functioned as a home space in which urban, low socioeconomic status kids exhibit their autonomy amidst the policing of bodies and live in a wild profusion. How can we begin to reimagine these to create new discursive practices?

Families

In Chapter 1, I discussed in narrative form, how our family's stories largely inform our personal stories. Implicit in that anecdote was the idea that our "stories" encompass the interaction of the social, economic, and personal narratives in ideological and material ways. Our stories are our grids, our habitus, maps of historical networks. Our networks tell us much about a person's journey between public and private worlds. Further, families serve as our points of entry into social mobilization (Lareau, 1988) the capital they give us, and our experiences, we take into educative places (Dewey, 2009). Yet notions of family are as contestable as notions of schooling, with most educative spaces functioning in networks of discursive practices (Foucault, 1995) that privilege certain capital over others through a hidden curriculum (Apple, 2009) that does not allow for the non-school curriculum (Robinson, 2007) engendered by the families of working class populations. In effect LSYOU functions as a social network to those least likely to gain entrance and have positive experiences in the public sphere. LSYOU's holistic approach to develop the whole child might be better understood as a way of equipping adolescents with the knapsack of survival tools necessary for negotiating shifting educational, social, and cultural

landscapes that require dominant ways of knowing that come through greater interactions with the public sphere, and fostering relationships with institutional gatekeepers, from which low SES, minority populations have historically been disenfranchised. LSYOU as a discursive space has made possible the mediation of public and private by refocusing the historical deficit narrative away from families with a critical eye towards the *structures that historically mediate the gulf between private and public* for those families.

Here then, the notion of “public” as a discursive formation can be interrogated. Many scholars have critiqued notions of the public sphere for its historically exclusive and neutralizing tendencies. While Giroux (2001) notes the potentiality of the public to serve as a “mediating space” (p. 236) in which the conditions for everyday existence can be reconciled, he suggests the dialogical nature is lost to the legitimizing tendencies of discursive political interests. Fine (1991) also notes that the private-public split is an “ideological construction” that preserves corporate interests thus silencing family interests (p. 183). Notions of minoritized populations perception of the “public” function in more explicit ways and is conceptualized as crossing borders (Anzaldua, 1987); a triple quandary (Boykin, 1986); double consciousness (Du Bois, 2012); mis-education (Woodson, 2000); as caste-like systems (Ogbu, 1978), a constant “rememory” (Morrison, 2004), disremembering (Fordham, 2010); of being “on the porch” (Torres, 2002); a shade of blue (Glaude, 2007); and an ontoepistemological in-between (Taliefero, 2006). Were this a simple question of *language*, one could suspect that these scholars liken “public” traversing to something so dubiously melancholy incurring physical and psychic duress leading one to wonder, what makes the journey to the “public” fraught with so much difficulty? Should we be suspect of their positionality, Delpit (1988) cautions us to trust “that people are experts on their own lives...authentic chroniclers of their own experience (p. 297).

Fine & Weis (1998) note that a critique of the public is not a call for a “dismantling of the state”, but rather an insistence “on a state that serves well and equitably its citizenry” (p. 285). What is their language of experience existing within the contradiction of the public sphere as practice “saying” to us? And what are the implications for youth?

Recognition of Othering as Discursive Practice

The subtlety of othering logic must be recognized. Othering has been made possible through spatio-geographical practices typical of economies of power such as colonization-type mechanisms which makes minoritized populations greater objects of disciplinary surveillance, making it necessary to consider everyday spatio-geographical implications for policies. Othering has been made possible through institutional practices with thin veneers of compensatory agendas (Kozol, 1967), but through an actual analysis of its practices continue to be exclusionary to historically oppressed populations, necessitating an understanding of historically responsible educational practices (Milner, 2012). Othering has been made possible through funding patterns which provided compensatory education to schools with high minority populations, a tactic which disallowed confronting larger systemic disparities, that of systemic institutional inequity (NYSED, 2006), which necessitates an understanding of how funding and institutional interests as types of property can influence curriculum (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

(Dis)covering the Other

To begin to imagine the type of relationality posed by Villiers-Botha & Cilliers (2010) we must first confront our internal fears, the underlying reasons that cause the fear of the other. Could it be simply a matter of changing our language, or the language of discourse practices that inform interactions of public and private? Fordham (2010) suggests our racial and national

identities “continue to profoundly shape human practices and interactions even when we use language that suggests otherwise” (p. 26). Yet understanding that racial and national identities are confluences of social ideologies implicates not only language, but the language of discourse practices that inform constructions of identity through oppositional discourses, a point Fordham eloquently makes in her analysis. A responsible notion of difference does not imply opposition as Cilliers (2010) notes, “In order to be able to recognize the other as other at all, some form of identity between the self and the other is required” (p. 12). Yet for meaning to be a possibility, “some form of similarity” must exist (Cilliers, 2010, p. 13). When we move away from the Western ego-centric question of ‘Who am I?’ and begin to consider reframing the question in a different discourse, that of one which emphasizes ‘Who or what are human beings?’ we might begin to avoid the “empty sameness” (Foucault, 1980, p. 117) characteristic of dominant discursive practices perpetuating the notion of difference as oppositional. If as Cilliers (2010) suggests the *totally* alien is unrecognizable; then Angelou’s claim of humanity vis-à-vis similarity that “I am human, and nothing human can be alien to me,” suggests identifiable reciprocity. Or, as Fanon (2008) would proffer, “Why not simply try to touch the other, feel the other, discover each other” (p. 206)?

Is it a matter of ethics? If our justification for treating someone else is contingent upon whom or what we think *we* are, and whom or what we think *they* are, we need to first reconsider whom we are. There is no individual “I” because,

We cannot be born pre-programmed with an inherent idea of what it means to be human and how we have to be to get on in the world, nor with a fixed idea of what the world itself is. These ideas have to be developed through an engagement with the world (Villiers-Botha & Cilliers, 2010, p. 33).

The Des Cartesian idea of the egocentric “I” and the *you* who is “Other” fails under this assertion. If it is true that ideas of self “have to be developed through an engagement with the

world” and the way we come to understand the world is through the basic social structure unit known as the family, through reciprocal commitment and attachment (Ball, 1972), then we have always-already been equipped with a lens to see the world as a complex place where boundaries of I/You collapse under the weight of *relationality*. The African proverb reminds us, “It takes a village to raise a child.” Yet the “Enlightenment’s ideal conception of the self still predominates” (Villiers-Botha & Cilliers, 2010, p. 20), in the business world, a positionality from which many institutions still take their cue and I would argue more so, especially in the field of Western education. It takes a village. However, this begins with the very simple notion of whom we imagine ourselves to be and what we consider as our obligation to our children. What Villiers-Botha & Cilliers (2010) propose is perhaps a way to rethink notions of at-riskness and perceptions of the children who find themselves immersed in discursive networks.

Indeed, Gershon (2012) agrees that “current constructions of ‘at risk’ are interruptions in our own ethical community’s consensus” (p. 369). Yet, it is in the notion of an “ethical community” that I take a pause and question, “*whose* ethical community?” As De Certeau (1978) reminds us: “There is no Trojan horse unconquerable by Reason...” (p. 36). That is to say, the very fact that “at risk” can be spoken underscores the fictive notion that an “ethical community” exists; for if the community was truly ethical, “at risk” would be non-existent as Preiser & Cilliers (2010) explain: “Ethics is also not something that gets integrated into...culture, but *lies at the heart of establishing and envisioning a culture to begin with*” [my italics] (p. 268). It is what Freire (2009) suggests is an ethical curriculum, that practices of freedom are inherently dialogical “from the outset” (p. 86). As is the case of LSYOU we must begin an inquiry into social problems with the framing of existing relations not as a condition of existence but as a problem to be solved, thereby exposing the potentiality for improvement.

Conclusion

Lest, my point be misunderstood, I am not suggesting that we resort to a type of philosophical humanism that does not translate to everyday practices. I am suggesting a type of “critical bifocality” (Weis & Fine, 2012) that makes clear the connection between rhetoric, structures, and practices. When we say “public” we must question, “whose public?” Dewey (1954) reminds us that our problem is a *practical* one “of human beings living in association with one another” (p. 32). We can “know” the public by trial and error or by being intelligently guided by knowledge of the past – through *experience*. He says, “since conditions of action and of inquiry and knowledge are always changing, the experiment must always be retried; the State must always be rediscovered” (p. 34). Du Bois (2003) too suggests that “All human problems, then, center in the Immortal Child and his education is the problem of problems” (p. 199). In either case, what Dewey and Du Bois are suggesting is a type of pragmatic understanding of knowledge of the past rooted in the possibility of future, both of which are mediated in the experiences of the “dynamic present” (Freire, 2009). In light of this pragmatic outlook, I suggest the limitations of language and the fixedness of kids with “at risk” identities as a title can be understood as a *practical* one.

Ortega (1941) writes:

The stone is given its existence; it need not fight for being what it is – a stone in the field. Man has to be himself in spite of unfavorable circumstances; that means he has to make his own existence at every single moment. He is given the abstract possibility of existing, but not the reality. This he has to conquer hour after hour. Man must earn his life, not only economically but metaphysically...Everything else in the world is what it is. An entity whose mode of being consists in what it is already, whose potentiality coincides at once with his reality, we call a “thing.” Things are given their being ready-made. (pp. 153-155).

Man names things, but who or what names man? Is it history, his present, or his future? For Ortega, man is “unique” because his “being consists not in what it is already, but in what it is not yet, a being that consists in not-yet-being” (p. 154). When Ortega concludes, “*Man, in a word, has no nature; what he has is – history*” he is suggesting that man’s potentiality will always exceed his reality. Freire (2009) explains the man who has no nature as “tak[ing] the people’s historicity as their starting point” in understanding that “as beings in the process of *becoming* – as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality (p. 84). Ortega (1941) echoes consensus, “Man is a substantial emigrant on a pilgrimage of being, and it is accordingly meaningless to set limits to what he is capable of being” (p. 157). Thus, the knowledge of the incompleteness and the radical possibility of the future becomes “prophetic” (Freire, 2009; West, 1989) existing in hope. “Hope is rooted in men’s incompleteness” (Freire, 2009, p. 91), an acknowledgement of their “here and now” as merely “limiting” not as fated and unalterable” (p. 85) but temporal and subject to change through “reflection and action” (p. 87). If indeed one’s “experiments already made with life narrow man’s future” (Ortega, 1941, p. 157), one’s as of yet unrealized experiments with life exists in a future pregnant with possibility.

What I have learned then, about kids who have been labeled “at risk” is that theirs are lives in motion. Freire (2009) cautions us about immobility, calling it a “fatal threat” (p. 84) to the potentiality of the future. Indeed, I realized that, whether immobility is understood literally in terms of connoting movement or understood discursively as metaphor for the life bound to one idea or social, cultural, or political locale, “immobility” is an act of violence to the human condition. In the case of the students whose lives intertwined with each other, along with institutional gatekeepers, these interactions enhanced their capacity to expand their cultural,

social, and political “outsidedness,” that is, their opportunities to carve out new representational spaces by their introduction to “an other in relation to [their] “I”” (De Certeau, 1984, p. 99).

Additionally, a discussion of the importance of “mobility” has implications for how we approach different discourse communities. In this instance I apply the concept of mobility to understanding language as specific discourse practice. Understood thusly, we were able to “move” between different discursive formations of a notion of “family” to (re)conceive how “family” functions differently as a language of specific discourse practices through time, place, and space, in contradictory, unstable, and complex ways. Having allowed our minds to accept no easy essentialisms of family, we are able to place the narratives of “brother’s keeper,” of an “LSYOU Family,” of gatekeepers who are like “grandmothers,” together in somewhat unifying ways, and yet again, consider how “family” as a discursive practice would function in *your* classroom as refracted through your positionalities, *your* institutional context, and the positionalities of the learners whom are entrusted to you. We still find ourselves tasked with innumerable configurations of possibilities inherent in language as discourse practices. Yet, that is the hope of inquiry.

I also consider the possibilities inherent in the idea of movement, relative to the practice of inquiry. By that I mean, understanding the fluid nature of our experience, as refractions, reflections, and (dis)continuities; I wonder about the possibilities that result from mobility in form. Despite growing consensus in the historical conversation about the pervasive reproductive power of the Western narrative, we continue to overwhelmingly consent to use the language of the West in our practice, essentially then, functioning as complicit agents in the historical agenda of domination. If the language of the West were sufficient, this narrative, the LSYOU narrative, the kids’ narratives, and your narratives, would not exist. To that end, some of us have been

engaged in a subversive project, participating in the Western game with eyes wide shut. Today we see with eyes wide open.

We must encourage “movement,” intellectual and physical, at the level of reflection and action, across multiple spatial-geographical and ideological borders. When our potentiality and reality collide we become nothing more than stones with an already-given existence. We are not stones. We are humans.

Move.

Suggestions for Practice

At risk youth face a host of barriers affecting their matriculation through primary, secondary, and postsecondary education institutions. These barriers include lack of experiential knowledge, an unavailability of enrichment opportunities, a lack of monetary resources necessary to connect students to enrichment opportunities, an absence of institutional resources addressing existential conditions, and anti-pragmatic structural policies and practices (i.e. social construct of public and private, with their “roles” and respective rules and obligations). A focus on achievement that does not address low income students’ fundamental existential conditions in tandem with targeted structural policies and procedures aimed at addressing and reducing systemic inequities will have deleterious effects for a population over-representing categories of lower academic performance.

Public and private should be reconsidered conjointly. The split between the home as site of social services and the school as educating institution creates an unbearable strain on both schools and families. Instead a pragmatic viewpoint suggests the introduction of community agencies into the relationship who can work in tandem with families and schools, in the offering of educative social services. Etzioni (1983) suggests that “social services will have to be

provided in large part by neighborhoods, voluntary associations, religious and ethnic groups, and local communities” (p. 130). Yet, for under-resourced communities, from which population the students of LSYOU are constituted, the likely reality is that an absence of resources will be reflected in the economy, the school system, and local neighborhoods. It becomes important that community partners, constituting the heads of local corporations, policymakers, and volunteer groups fully understand the systemic barriers that contribute to a lack of student achievement, and its systemic implications, as lack of education greatly impairs a region’s health, delinquency, and economic competitiveness. Once cognizant of sociocultural and economic barriers to student success: a lack of cultural capital; lack of social capital; boundedness to geographical place; lack of experience with different cultures; no access to institutional gatekeepers; and institutional inequities, those who are in a position to impact the community can begin to effectuate change. Extant literature recognizes adolescence as a developmentally appropriate time of growth for students (Gottfredson, 2004; Curry, Binns, & Belser, in press; & Young, 1983), and it is during the formative years that students should interact with different environments as much as possible.

At the institutional level a multifaceted approach is necessary, and includes a three-prong approach of rhetoric, policy, and practice. First, there is the matter of rhetoric. A community consists of multiple individuals existing within boundaries, though identifiable by shared geo-spatial, cultural, social, and economic delineations. Yet, within each of these divisions, rests multiple cross-sectional pockets of consensus. To realize the promise of community, more individuals must be involved in shared concerns (Etzioni, 1983). Community, in a sense, simultaneously encapsulates and subsumes the binary of public and private into a single idea: together we function as one. Secondly, policies should be written with a bipartisan ethos. For instance, LSYOU, the organizational policies reflect a keen understanding of its population’s

needs, the way those needs collide with institutional interests, and the ability of the organization to fulfill its role as educational institution while not sacrificing student buy-in. Third, rhetoric and institutional policies are effectuated through practices espoused by institutional gatekeepers. Institutional gatekeepers then must be aware of their positionality to effectuate a cultural climate for students. Additionally, institutional gatekeepers would do well to be informed about information-rich local resources which meet the needs of their constituencies.

Opportunities to transgress delineated boundaries should exist for low income and minoritized populations. Transgression of local boundaries should occur frequently in the area of work readiness and neighborhood residential mobility. The residential mobility of working class, single-parent female-headed families is often confined to local contexts, often spanning a distance of a block or a nearby neighborhood (Cochran, Lerner, Riley, Gunnarsson, & Henderson, 1990). Neighborhoods have the potentiality to translate “socioeconomic resources...into social opportunities or constraints” (Cochran et al., 1990, p. 295). As educational attainment levels rise, so do opportunities to cross geospatial boundaries and with it increased opportunities for socialization. Work readiness is an area in which to foster spatial mobility. As neighborhoods tend to be sharply divided by race and SES, viable employment opportunities can be realized by the community only through a public sector commitment to urban renewal in impoverished areas and simultaneously the private sector commitment of local industries to dedicate internships to low opportunity students. An opportune time for dedicated internships (apprenticeships and/or mentorships) is during the summer months, when low opportunity students are more likely to experience losses in math and reading. The ability to transgress cultural boundaries comes with a price-tag of community commitment and the singular belief that an educated populace benefits the entire state economy.

Implications

Educators

As educators you wield tremendous power in scholars' educational journeys. If this knowledge, complicated by the bureaucratic structure of the school becomes burdensome, consider the process similar to the beginning of a journey – all it takes is a small step forward. Your scholars appreciate the help you give when you dialogue with them about the intersectionality of their lives and real world discourse. However, as learning is inherently dialogical, you must be aware of your positionality as a mediator of school resources, dispositions, and knowledge for your scholars. Additionally, consider your scholars as valuable holders of funds of knowledge. Mutually inspire each other. A rock will always be a rock, but in every hour the possibility exists for a man to negotiate the conditions of his existence.

Parents

Our hope rests in the immortal child. When you have high expectations for your child, a child is more inclined to live up to those expectations. Engage your child in dialogue about future hopes, dreams, and aspirations as early as second grade. If possible, maintain an open line of communication with your child's school and teachers. Your eagerness to participate in the educative process can engender dialogue with the institutional gatekeepers who have information about possible resources available to your child. Inquire about summer programs, after school, tutoring, or enrichment programs for which your child might qualify. If the constraints of work or transportation prevent travel to your child's school, send a letter or email or call. Your high expectations for your child will be matched by the teacher.

Community

It takes a village to raise a child. The difference between the world you envision for your children and the reality in which they currently exist is mediated by your action in the present. Get to know your elected officials and engage them in dialogue about area concerns. Familiarize yourself with local media outlets, school administrators, and area businesses. Utilize your churches, your mosques, your temples, religious institutions as they typically have untapped resources and are network-rich. Rally together in your adjoining neighborhoods and form networks of support and serve as points of contact for each other. No one will ever have more vested interest in your community, than you. Should this process seem overwhelming, begin small. Go outside, knock on your neighbor's door, give them a big smile, and engage them in dialogue about neighborhood concerns. Sometimes we have not, because we ask not. Never be afraid to ask. You will learn to get accustomed to being told "no" and you will be inspired by every gracious "yes."

Funders

Poverty has many faces and affects no one specific demographic. Like power, poverty functions discursively and can exist in many forms: economically, intellectuality, physically, and spiritually. To that end, poverty affects us all. A distribution of resources then should be twice implicated for their potentiality to enhance the competency of both program providers and also student beneficiaries. Thank you. No act of kindness, however small, is ever wasted.

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APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

This appendix contains the research instruments submitted to and approved by the Louisiana State University Institutional Review Board as part of an Application for Approval of Projects Which Use Human Subjects.

Application for Approval of Projects Which Use Human Subjects

This application is used for projects/studies that cannot be reviewed through the exemption process.

-- Applicant, Please fill out the application in its entirety and include two copies of the completed application as well as parts A-E, listed below. Once the application is completed, please submit to the IRB Office for review and please allow ample time for the application to be reviewed. Expedited reviews usually takes 2 weeks. Carefully completed applications should be submitted 3 weeks before a meeting to ensure a prompt decision.

-- A Complete Application Includes All of the Following:

- (A) Two copies of this completed form and two copies of part B thru E.
- (B) A brief project description (adequate to evaluate risks to subjects and to explain your responses to Parts 1&2)
- (C) Copies of all instruments to be used.
- (D) If this proposal is part of a grant proposal, include a copy of the proposal and all recruitment material.
- (E) The consent form that you will use in the study (see part 3 for more information.)
- (F) Certificate of Completion of Human Subjects Protection Training for all personnel involved in the project, including students who are involved with testing or handling data, unless already on file with the IRB. Training link: (<http://www.lsu.edu/irb>)
- (G) IRB Security of Data Agreement: (<http://www.lsu.edu/irb>)

1) Principal Investigator*: Roland W. Mitchell Rank Associate Professor
*PI must be an LSU Faculty Member

Dept: ETTP Ph: 225-578-2156 E-mail: rwmitch@lsu.edu

2) Co Investigator(s): please include department, rank, phone and e-mail for each
Jessica L. Etkano
Doctoral Candidate
ETTP - Higher Education Administration
225-287-8978; jekano1@tigers.lsu.edu

3) Project Title: Capturing the Flight of the Monarch: Narrative Intersections of Identity and Experience in LSYOU.

4) Proposal Start Date: 4/1/2012 5) Proposed Duration Months: 21

6) Number of Subjects Requested: 50 7) LSU Proposal #: 3275

8) Funding Sought From: n/a

ASSURANCE OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR named above
I accept personal responsibility for the conduct of this study (including ensuring compliance of co-investigators/co-workers) in accordance with the documents submitted herewith and the following guidelines for human subject protection: The Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance (FWA00003892) with OHRP and 45 CFR 46 (available from <http://www.lsu.edu/irb>). I also understand that copies of all consent forms must be maintained at LSU for three years after the completion of the project. If I leave LSU before that time, the consent forms should be preserved in the Departmental Office.

Signature of PI: [Signature] Date: 3/15/12

ASSURANCE OF STUDENT/PROJECT COORDINATOR named above. If multiple Co-Investigators, please create a "signature page" for all Co-Investigators to sign. Attach the "signature page" to the application.

I agree to adhere to the terms of this document and am familiar with the documents referenced above.

Signature of Co-PI(s): Jessica Etkano Date: 3/15/12

LSU
Institutional Review Board
Dr. Robert Mathews, Chair
131 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.8692
F: 225.578.6792
irb@lsu.edu
lsu.edu/irb

IRB# 3275 LSU Proposal # 3275
☐ Full
☒ Expedited
☒ Human Subjects Training
☒ Complete Application

Study Approved By:
Dr. Robert C. Mathews, Chairman
Institutional Review Board
Louisiana State University
203 B-1 David Boyd Hall
225-578-8692 | www.lsu.edu/irb
Approval Expires: 3/21/2013

Consent Form

Parental Consent Form for the Project:

Intersections of Identity, Experience, and Self-Efficacy in LSYOU

Performance Site: LSYOU Program, Louisiana State University, 118 William Hatcher Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803, 225-578-1751.

Investigator: The following investigator is available for questions, M-F, 8:00 a.m. – 4:40 p.m.
Jessica Exkano
Ph.D. Candidate
Louisiana State University
224 Peabody Hall
Jexkan1@tigers.lsu.edu
225-287-8978

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this research project is to understand how students interpret their experiences in a college access program, and how the program impacts student identity.

Inclusion Criteria: 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th grade students who have participated, or are currently participating in LSYOU.

Exclusion Criteria: Children who have not been recipients of LSYOU's services; Pregnant persons are excluded from this research.

Description of the Study: During the summer residential component, over a period of one month, the researcher will observe the LSYOU students' experiences in the classroom, during activities, and during "down time." The researcher will not interfere with teacher instruction or the learning environment, unless invited by the teacher/instructor/activity leader to do so. The researcher will interview students in an attempt to understand how they are experiencing LSYOU in terms of convergences and divergences with their everyday experiences. The students may be contacted during the academic year for follow up interviews.

Benefits: The study may not directly benefit current students. The results of this study will be shared with the larger educational community, and may benefit those who are interested in culturally relevant pedagogy, increased teacher efficacy, understanding the experiences of at-risk populations, and college access programs which help to narrow the achievement gap.

Risks: There are no known risks.

Right to Refuse: Participation is voluntary, and a child will become part of the study only if both child and parent agree to the child's participation. At any time, either the subject may

withdraw from the study or the subject's parent may withdraw the subject from the study without penalty or loss of any benefit to which they might otherwise be entitled.

Privacy: Results of the study may be published, but no names or identifying information will be included for publication. Pseudonyms will be used to protect the identity of participants and identifying information will be removed. Subject identity will remain confidential unless disclosure is required by law.

Financial Information: There is no cost for participation in the study, nor is there any compensation to the subjects for participation.

Signatures:

The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigator. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Robert C. Mathews, Chairman, Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, www.lsu.edu/irb. I will allow my child to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the investigator's obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

Parent's Signature:_____ Date:_____

The parent/guardian has indicated to me that he/she is unable to read. I certify that I have read this consent form to the parent/guardian and explained that by completing the signature line above he/she has given permission for the child to participate in the study.

Signature of Reader:_____ Date:_____

Child Assent Form for Project:

Intersections of Identity, Experience, and Self-Efficacy in LSYOU.

I, _____, agree to be in a study that explores my experiences with LSYOU. I will not have to do anything that is not required outside of the LSYOU program. Sometimes I will talk about my experiences in LSYOU and they will be tape recorded. Other times I will simply be observed participating in LSYOU programs and activities. I may be contacted for follow-up interviews at the conclusion of the program and during the academic year. I can decide to stop being in the study at any time without getting in trouble.

Child's Signature: _____ Age: _____ Date: _____

Witness* _____ Date: _____

* (N.B. Witness must be present for the assent process, not just the signature by the minor.)

APPENDIX B: STUDENT PROTOCOL

Student Protocol

How did you hear about LSYOU?

What did you think it would be like?

What are your feelings towards it now?

Describe what a typical summer day is like for you.

You have a daily routine here at LSYOU. What did you first think about the schedule?

(Are your days typically planned out?)

Let's talk about jobs:

Have you ever had job experience before? (If so, what?)

How do you feel about your LSYOU job?

Describe how this job fits with your personality?

What have you learned about yourself as a result of your job experience?

Who in your office stands out to you?

Classes

What do you think about the topics discussed in your health and wellness classes?

Do you have opportunities to talk about those topics in your daily routines?

Describe your LSYOU math and English classes compared to your old school?

College Life

What did you know about college prior to coming to LSYOU?

Being on campus, what do you think about college life now?

What are your feelings about dorm life? (How does it make you feel to live on your own?)

What about having roommates? Is this your first time sharing living space?

How did you feel about the college tours?

Relationships

Describe your advisor.

How would you describe your peer counselor?

What have you experienced at LSYOU for the first time?

From your interactions with different people and places, have you learned anything new about yourselves in the past three weeks?

How would you explain LSYOU to someone you knew?

How would you describe the person you are today, compared to three weeks ago?

Student Journal Protocol

What does family mean to you?

What do you like most/least about LSYOU?

Describe a fun weekend experience.

How does it feel to be in a college dorm, on campus, and away from home?

Describe your LSYOU job experience.

How does it feel to be responsible for washing your own clothes at LSYOU?

Express yourself, using a rap, a picture, or a poem.

Meeting new people can be exciting. What have you learned from the different people you have met?

What do you want to be when you grow up?

APPENDIX C: ADVISOR PROTOCOL

Please state your name and job title.

1. Describe a typical day on campus.
2. Which services are most utilized by students?
3. Describe the services you provide to the students.
4. Based upon your interaction with the students, what do you think the program means to them?
5. How do students respond to the program?
6. What role does student motivation play?

VITA

Jessica Lynn Exkano was reared in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. She is the daughter of Walter Billy Exkano and Tracy Lynn Exkano, and the sibling of Vallorie Joy Exkano.

Having worked extensively with “at risk” populations for the last several years, Jessica’s work has spanned K-12 and postsecondary education. She has worked in the areas of student athletics, dropout prevention, and GED completion programs. Her work has taken her into juvenile detention centers, courtrooms, and across graduation stages. These experiences led to Jessica’s interest in understanding the knowledge that the students brought into learning spaces.

Jessica’s interest in understanding one’s language of interaction, emerges from the knowledge of language as a discursive practice. Thus, her critique of “at risk” discourse, subsumed under the larger discourse universe of “special populations,” is one of angst, at the implications for how we respond to language as situated practices. In order to understand one’s language of interaction, the way one “speaks,” there must be an honest effort on society’s part for diaphanous conversation. Society should therefore, approach each person’s language of interaction as being characterized by such fineness of texture that permits the ability to see through the veil of difference, while not disallowing the uniqueness of form.